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Great Religious Teachers of the East

Alfred W. Martin

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GREAT RELIGIOUS TEACHERS OF THE EAST



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GREAT RELIGIOUS TEACHERS OF THE EAST

BY

ALFRED W. MARTIN

ASSOCIATE LEADER OF THE SOCIETY FOR ETHICAL CULTURE OF NEW YORK

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NEW YORK, September 1, 1911.

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I

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST AND ITS RESULTS

I

THE DISCOVERY OF THE SACRED BOOKS OF THE EAST AND ITS RESULTS

WHEN this course of lectures was first announced, a well-meaning gentleman remarked, "This will be a succession of intellectual treats." Nothing could be further from my purpose than to meet this expectation. Interesting and instructive, perhaps, as much that I shall say may be, it is ethical culture, not intellectual entertainment, that constitutes the paramount aim of the course. My hope is that at the close of these lectures we shall find ourselves more catholic in our sympathies, more cosmopolitan in our attitude toward foreign faiths, more responsive to sources of inspiration that seemed wholly unpromising while we were under the baneful spell of prejudices born of ignorance. It is at such ethical results that this lecture-course

aims. Gotama and Zoroaster, Confucius and Mohammed — less known to most of us than Moses and the prophets, Jesus and Paul, — have something to teach us that we need to learn, if, indeed, "the Orient is to complete the Occident." Only as we take up into ourselves all that is vital in them are we enabled to appreciate the wonderful story of man's spiritual unfolding and to discover what it is that we still need to round out and complete our own developing lives. It is a pathetic mistake to suppose that no indispensable good can come out of Oriental Nazareths other than the Palestinian. Such an error is on a par with his who described the Middle Ages as the "dark ages" and was all the while blind to their light. Let me adduce an illustration. The supreme product of the Middle Ages was St. Francis of Assisi, and among the conspicuous characteristics of our modern life is the growing revival of interest in this saint. We see it chiefly in the remarkable increase of Franciscan literature within the past decade. The reason for this revival is the discovery that

the middle age was strong where our own is weak, that precisely those qualities in which St. Francis shone are the ones in which we are deplorably deficient, that his positive message is exactly what our age needs to give it balance and roundness. We have wakened to a realization of the truth that besides his negative spirituality, — as manifested in his asceticism and self-torture, — St. Francis possessed also positive spirituality; witness his intense moral earnestness, his profound religious insight and aspiration, his utter self-consecration to his calling, his genuine sympathy with Nature, his ineffable tenderness toward all living creatures, his constant habit of seeing the things of time under the aspect of eternity. And it is just these positive elements of his spiritual nature that our age sorely needs, to balance its absorption in material interests, its devotion to scientific pursuits, its allegiance to utilitarian standards of progress and success. Similarly, the positive messages transmitted to us from the great moral teachers of India, Persia, China and Arabia, notwith-

standing their local, transient elements, will be found to contain permanent and universal precepts concerning graces of character in which our occidental civilization is deficient. Thus priceless value and genuine revitalization are given to the teachings of these ancient oriental leaders the moment we enter into their spirit and note their contribution to the total content of the ideal of life.

And this leads us directly to a consideration of the spirit in which we shall deal with our subject. It is the spirit that manifests itself in the practice of appreciation, a modern virtue towards which the race has been slowly climbing. Starting from the low level of persecution, the three successive steps of human progress have been forbearance, tolerance and appreciation.

Time was, when, in Christian civilization, persecution seemed ethically warranted, when those in ecclesiastical authority, assuming that they only had the true religion, believed it was God's will that they should suppress dissenters and so vindicate and spread "God's truth."

If persuasion failed, they resorted to imprisonment. When that proved ineffectual, they tried the lash. As a final measure they condemned the dissenters to the stake, hoping by fire to exterminate both heresy and heretics. Nor are the traces of such persecution entirely extinct. To-day the Christian persecutes the Jew and the Jew the Christian. Romanism persecutes Protestantism, Orthodox Protestantism persecutes liberal Christianity, and liberal Christianity persecutes the religion that is no longer Christian.

A step upward in the direction of the ideal was taken when forbearance replaced persecution, when latitude was admitted in theology no less than in geography, when dissenters were *reluctantly* allowed to hold their heresies without fear of molestation or threat. And when tolerance was substituted for forbearance, it meant a new attitude toward dissenters, because tolerance is the *willing* consent to let others hold opinions different from our own. Yet even this attitude, noble as it is, cannot be regarded as the acme of spiritual attainment.

For tolerance always implies a measure of concession. We tolerate what we must, but would suppress if we could. Tolerance has an air of patronizing condescension about it. He who tolerates affects a certain offensive superiority, exhibits a spiritual conceit. Clearly, then, it cannot be true that "tolerance is the loveliest flower on the rose-bush of liberalism." Lovelier far is appreciation, which, while wholly free from the blemish that mars the beauty of tolerance, adds to that beauty fresh graces all its own. Appreciation is the spirit which exceeds tolerance, despises mere forbearance, blushes at persecution. Toward the various religious systems of the world it takes a sympathetic attitude, seeking to estimate each from the dynamic rather than from the static viewpoint, judging each, not only by what it originally was, but also by what it has grown to be. The spirit of appreciation is such that before every religious teacher will it bow, be he Gotama or Zoroaster, Jesus or Mohammed, evaluating each according to the amount of truth he has to teach and the in-

spiration which the record of his life affords. Similarly, in its attitude toward the messages of the world's great teachers, the mark of the spirit of appreciation appears. For it looks upon them all as like the stops and pedals of some vast organ, each contributing its particular tone to the harmony of human aspiration and faith; some accentuating the essential, others the ornamental notes, none, of itself, producing the full-orbed music, but the harmonious blending of all creating the sublime world-symphony of reverence for the good, the beautiful and the true.

Even toward error will he, in whom the spirit of appreciation dwells, take a worthy attitude. Realizing that all error is kept alive only by the germ of truth which it hides, he will feel it his duty to search for that germ and the more unpromising its appearance the more diligent his search. For, certain it is that we always have something to learn till we have traced, what to us are erroneous beliefs, back to their source and discovered what good and useful end they still serve for those

who hold them. If the spirit of appreciation be indeed ours, we shall feel no disposition either to ridicule superstitions or to regard our own cherished beliefs as complete and final truths. Rather will we realize our own finitude and the immense firmament of thought under which we move, ever watchful for each new star that the guiding heavens may reveal.

The ultimate source of information, to which alone we shall appeal in this series of studies, includes, besides the Old and New Testaments, that noble set of volumes known as "The Sacred Books of the East," — translations into English of what might be called "the Bibles" of the Hindus, Buddhists, Parsees, Confucianists, Mohammedans.

When these sacred scriptures were discovered, it was as though some long-lost musical score had been brought to light, which, when played by an orchestra of reverent and trained musicians, proved to be a symphony of religions, destined to give a world-audience the sense of an universal spiritual fellowship. In

the year 711, when the Moors of northern Africa invaded Spain, they brought with them a book they called the "Word of God" and for which they made the most astounding inspirational claims. They declared that even though every extant copy of this book were to be destroyed, it would involve no irreparable loss, for an eternal copy exists in heaven whence it can be at any time revealed to men anew! This "revelation" proved to be the sacred book of the Mohammedans, the Qur'an, long since translated from Arabic into the chief languages of the civilized world.

About the middle of the fourteenth century certain travellers from central Europe found their way to a fertile, densely populated country which they called "Cathay." On returning home, they reported upon conditions observed in this country — which meanwhile they had learned to name "China." They told of the enormous literary production of its people and more especially of the books that dealt with the philosophy of life and with the systematic regulation of human conduct in all

the various relations, private and public, in which members of a community find themselves. These books were none other than the Confucian sacred scriptures, most of which had been edited by Confucius, while one of the books was the work of his own hand. These, too, like the Qur'an, were eventually translated into the leading languages of the world.

In 1754 Anquetil du Perron, a university student, browsing in the royal library of Paris, came upon some dusty fragments of an ancient manuscript, written in a Sanskrit dialect. Great was his joy on finding them to be a portion of the "Avesta," or Bible of the Zoroastrians. Eager to know more of this literature and of these people, he took ship for Bombay, where, for a millennium or more a colony of Zoroastrian exiles had been settled. Anquetil resided among these people for three years, mastering their language and their religion. Before returning to Paris, he came into possession of one hundred and eighty manuscripts, which, together with his original find

in the royal library, constitutes practically all that we now have of the Zoroastrian Bible. The first translation of this book into any European language appeared in 1771 at Paris. Since that time, however, it has been made accessible to English and German readers as well as French.

In 1757, when the British invasion and occupancy of India had fairly begun, there was discovered (as an indirect result of that great commercial enterprise) the "Rig-Veda," the oldest portion of one of the oldest Bibles in the world. It is a collection of one thousand and seventeen prayer-hymns, addressed to the personified forces and phenomena of Nature. Following close upon this discovery came that of the other three "Vedas." Then the "Aranyakas" or forest meditations, the "Upanishads" and the two great Epics, the "Mahabbarata" and the "Ramayana," were discovered, constituting, in all, a body of Hindu sacred literature more than four times as large as the Christian scriptures. Soon other Indian books were brought to light, and these proved to be

none other than the sacred scriptures of the Buddhists, the "Pitakas."

It is to these "Sacred Books of the East," then, that we shall turn, from week to week, for they are our *ultimate* sources of information concerning those great moral leaders whose life and teaching we are to study.

From the discovery and translation of this oriental literature two important results have followed, the one, direct and immediate; the other, indirect and remote.

The first and immediate effect was the creation of a new science, commonly known as "comparative religion," or "comparative theology" as some scholars have preferred to designate it. This science, proceeding by the orderly method familiar to natural scientists — observation, classification, hypothesis and verification — has already produced a series of assured results of far-reaching significance for the unification of religions. Let us review the more important of these conclusions which the science of comparative religion has established.

1. The universality of fundamental moral

sentiments, such as justice, veracity, gratitude, service, sympathy, love. Far from characterizing the gospel of any one religion alone, these moral ideas are found to be common to all religions. Take, for example, the moral sentiment of catholicity and note the oneness of thought beneath the variety of statement as we see it in the following quotations from the literature of the seven extant great religions.

Hindu: "The object of all religions is alike, all seek the object of their love and all the world is love's dwelling-place."

Buddhist: "The root of religion is to reverence one's own faith and never to revile the faith of others. My religion is like the sky, it has room for all and like water it washes all alike."

Zoroastrian: "Have the religions of mankind no common ground? Is there not everywhere the same enrapturing beauty? Broad indeed is the carpet God has spread and many are the colors He has given it. Whatever road I take joins the highway that leads to Thee."

Confucian: "The broad-minded see the

truth in different religions, the narrow-minded see only the differences."

Jewish: "Wisdom in all ages entering into holy souls, maketh them friends of God and prophets."

Christian: "Are we not all children of one Father? Hath not one God created us? Behold how good and pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Mohammedan: "Whatever be thy religion, associate with men who think differently from thee. If thou canst mix with them freely and are not angered at hearing their doctrines, thou hast attained freedom and art a master of creation."

2. The universality of such religious sentiments as wonder, awe, reverence, worship, hope, aspiration. These, too, the comparative method has proved, are present in all the various systems of faith. Here, for example, are seven passages from the same seven Bibles on faith in man's survival of death, the trust that his earthly life is not the only life.

Hindu: "Thy body give to the plants and

to the waters, but there is an immortal part of thee, transport it to the world of the holy."

Buddhist: "The soul is myself, the body is only my dwelling-place. Good actions go with the soul beyond the river of death."

Zoroastrian: "I fear not death. I fear only not having lived well enough."

Confucian: "It is because men see only their bodies that they hate death."

Jewish: "The memorial of virtue is immortal. Blessed is the memory of the just, for their works do follow them."

Christian: "Though our outward man perish, yet is our inward man day by day renewed."

Mohammedan: "Mortals ask, what property has he left behind him? Angels ask, what good deeds has he sent on before him?"

3. Unity of spiritual substance in diversity of religious forms and ceremonies. Differences of climate, environment, heredity and racial origin, these, it has been shown, gave rise to varieties in the expression of one and the same fundamental religious feeling.

Whether it be the Papuan, squatting in dumb meditation before his feathered God; or the Aztec, dancing and chanting before his symbolical block; or the Moslem, prostrate in front of his Mosque; or the Christian, kneeling in petitional prayer to his Father in heaven; or the cosmic theist, silently seeking communion and at-one-ment with the Infinite and Eternal whence all things and beings are derived; in each case it is one and the same sense of dependence on a higher Power and of hunger for a higher, worthier life that is expressed.

4. Most of the ten commandments antedate the Mosaic age and have their equivalents in most of the non-Semitic religions. Nay, more, in the light of "comparative religion" we see that there are at least four other commandments, contributed by Buddhism, Mohammedanism, and Confucianism, — concerning temperance, intellectual honesty, humaneness and cleanliness, — which may well be added to the familiar ten.

5. The Golden Rule, far from having origi-

nated with Jesus, or even five hundred years earlier, with Confucius, is as old as the oldest religion whose scriptures have come down to us and common to the Bibles of all the world's great religions. Thus we find seven versions of the Golden Rule corresponding to the seven great religions.

Hindu: "The true rule in life is to guard and do by the things of others as you do by your own."

Buddhist: "One should seek for others the happiness one desires for oneself."

Zoroastrian: "Do as you would be done by."

Confucian: "What you do not wish done to yourself do not unto others."

Jewish: "What you do not want your neighbor to do to you, do not unto him."

Christian: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them."

Mohammedan: "Let none of you treat another in a way you yourself would dislike to be treated."

Even the ancient Hebrew precept, "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (as we shall see more fully when we enter on our study of Moses), represents the law of justice as it was understood in primitive communities, and justice is the heart of the Golden Rule.

6. Religions can no longer be classified according to the division popular before the science of comparative religion was created, a division that recognized only two classes of religions, Christian and Pagan, divine and human, revealed and natural, true and false. We read a Vedic chant and marvel at its resemblance to familiar Old Testament psalms and to the refrain of the "Litany" in the Episcopalian Prayer-book. We hear the Zoroastrian's prayer for purity and note how slight a change in the language of his invocation would make it suit the spiritual need of any theist in any part of the world. The "Sermon on the Mount" and the "Noble Eightfold Path" have many more points of agreement than of difference, while the ethical spirit pervading the two discourses is the same.

Open the Bible of the Moslem, or of the Confucian, and there, no less than in the New Testament, the credentials of a religion are found, appealing in accents strong and beautiful to their respective believers even as do those of the Christian scriptures to the followers of Jesus and Paul.

7. Prior to the researches involved in the science of comparative religion it was generally supposed that there are moral precepts in the New Testament which have no parallel in any non-Christian literature. Such was the contention of a somewhat bumptious clergyman at a memorable meeting of the Free Religious Association of America held in Boston nearly forty years ago. This earnest, zealous apologist cited, with considerable unction, certain passages from the Gospels, adding that these could not be matched in the sacred books of any of the great ethnic religions. Present at this meeting was Ralph Waldo Emerson, himself one of the earliest and foremost champions of the new science. Knowing the clergyman's statement to be

without adequate foundation, he quietly arose and said, with characteristic dignity and serenity, "The gentleman's remark only proves how narrowly he has read." Rodrigues, in his "Origines du Sermon de la Montagne" has furnished conspicuous proof of the fact that all the salient teachings of Jesus had already been spoken by earlier Jewish leaders and that, consequently, his originality must be sought elsewhere than in his ethical utterances. Since the appearance of Rodrigues' monograph many an anthology has appeared, carrying the comparative method beyond the confines of the Talmud, Apocrypha and Old Testament to the great body of non-Jewish, pre-Christian literature, thereby reconfirming the conclusion that there is no moral precept in the New Testament but can be paralleled elsewhere in the Bibles of the great religions.

8. It remains to note one other important result achieved by the science of comparative religion. It has relegated to the realm of the obsolete and unreliable many a popular book on comparative religion, reminding us of

Æsop's familiar fable of the forester and the lion. Walking in the woods one day they fell to discussing the question, "Which is the stronger, a lion or a man?" Unable to arrive at a mutually satisfying answer, they were about to dismiss the subject when quite unexpectedly they came upon a piece of statuary representing a man in the act of throwing down a lion. "There," said the woodsman, "you see the man is the stronger." To which the lion replied, "Ah, yes; but their positions would have been reversed if a lion had been the sculptor." Too often have Christian literary sculptors exhibited the relative position of their own faith and that of non-Christians in such wise that it surely would have been reversed had the latter been the sculptors. Equally applicable is the fable to those Buddhists, Mohammedans and other non-Christians who have represented their respective religions as victoriously wrestling with Christianity. Typical of the former class are some of the volumes on non-Christian religious systems issued by the "Society

for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge," also that most popular of books on comparative religion, "The Ten Great Religions," by James Freeman Clarke, of sainted memory. It is with some reluctance that I make mention of his work, for it was of him that James Martineau — England's foremost theologian and philosopher in the nineteenth century — said to me: "He is the New Englander whom I venerate most since the time of Channing." Yet with all due deference to his great name and remembering that his work was published while the science of comparative religion was still in its infancy, it must be admitted that his fundamental position, symbolized by the unique design on the cover of his book, is contrary to the spirit, method and results of this science. In the light of those results it is no longer possible to regard Christianity as the "pleroma" of religion, containing all that is good and true in the other religions, adding thereto elements of faith and morals that make it the absolute religion and thereby distinguish it from all other systems of religion.

Pass we now to that indirect and remote result of the discovery and translation of the "Sacred Books of the East," to which I referred, namely, the famous religious convention held at Chicago in 1893. Given the discovery and translation of the "Sacred Books of the East;" given also the science of comparative religion with its verified conclusions, and there would follow as a natural, logical consequence a "World's Parliament of Religions." The "World's Fair" of that year furnished the occasion adequate to the convening of a universal congress of religions. Not since the discovery of America has anything so decisively marked the advance of civilization as this mammoth convention. Here, in truth, was something bigger than the Ferris wheel, brighter than the display of electric lights, grander than the splendor of the great "White City." Even that magnificent panorama of architecture and landscape-gardening on the "Court of Honor" paled before the procession of the world's great faiths. At the head of that procession walked a Swedenborgian lay-

man, Mr. C. C. Bonney, arm in arm with scarlet-robed Cardinal Gibbons, the highest dignitary of the Roman Catholic Church in the United States. Behind them walked Buddhist and Brahmin, Christian and Confucian, Jew and Mohammedan, Hindu monk and Methodist missionary, Zoroastrian priest and Greek Church bishop, — all in one triumphant march of brotherhood. Would that some painter had been present to put on canvas that memorable scene, symbolizing as it did the death-knell of sectarian exclusiveness, jealousy and pride, prophetic as it was of the coming peace among the conflicting religions of the world! The Parliament was conceived and planned by a Presbyterian preacher of Chicago, Rev. John Henry Barrows. The closing speech was delivered by a Swedenborgian layman, the final prayer offered by a Jewish rabbi and the benediction pronounced by a Roman Catholic bishop.

Of the one hundred and thirty-seven sects into which Christianity was then divided, practically all the larger bodies were represented at the Parliament, excepting only the

Episcopalian. Officially this branch of the Christian Church was without representation, though many Episcopalians were present on their own responsibility, notably the Reverends A. W. Momerie of London and R. Heber Newton of New York. The American Church followed the lead of the Anglican in declining to participate in the proceedings of the Parliament. The Archbishop of Canterbury, head of the Anglican Church, took the ground that were Christianity to be represented on the platform with all the other religions, it would place the Christian religion on a level of equality with these, which he, of course, could not admit. Consequently he had no alternative but to forbid the official representation of his Church. Given his premises, and we all must admit that the Archbishop was logical and consistent. For, when Christianity, through its representatives, consented to sit in the Parliament on equal terms with other faiths, it surrendered, whether intentionally or unconsciously, the claim to be the only true, divine religion in the world.

As for the effect of the Parliament on the Christian and non-Christian delegates, it was admitted by the latter that their conception of Christianity had undergone considerable modification. To these foreigners Christianity had come in warships and at the point of the bayonet. It has brought the missionary and the Bible indeed, but also the evils of the opium and rum traffic. Not a few of the missionaries had assumed a haughty, imperious, un-Christian air, and unfavorable judgment of Christians as a class ensued. But at the Parliament these oriental delegates had an opportunity to see phases of Christianity and types of Christian character hitherto unknown to them, and the result was that they returned to their respective homes with corrected conceptions of both Christianity and its representatives.

No less salutary and significant was the effect of the Parliament upon the occidental Christian contingent. Their eyes were now opened to certain facts as never before. There was brought home to them the fact that only one-

third of the total population of the globe is Christian and that with the single exception of Mohammedanism, all the world's great religions are older than Christianity. Nay more, the fact was brought freshly to light that in the formation of such Christian beliefs as the resurrection and the trinity and of such festivals as Christmas and Easter the influence of non-Christian religions is indisputable and clear. Not least among the benefits which the Parliament wrought was that exerted upon missionary enterprise. To-day it is practically impossible for our Christian missionaries to go to India or China, or any other oriental country armed with the doctrine that two-thirds of the earth's people are eternally doomed unless they accept the orthodox Christian system of theology. In the spring of 1893, four months before the Parliament was opened, the "American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions" debated the question whether or not missionaries should be allowed to go to the Orient unless they were prepared to teach the doctrines of "the fall

of man" and "hell." But since September of that year the question has not been revived, and it is safe to say it never will be. Still another positive good which the Parliament achieved was the wholesome humbling of those Christians who with a Pharisaic tone had "thanked God they were not as these pagan idolaters and infidels." For the Parliament made it plain that these pagans were believers, holding a living faith to which they strove to be faithful and in the divine origin of which they devoutly believe. Moreover, on the platform "pagan" prayers were offered, of which certain resident Christians confessed that they breathed as pure and elevated a spirit as those emanating from Christian hearts. Here, too, it was observed that there are aspects of modern life in which Confucianists and Zoroastrians are exceptionally civilized even as there are respects in which Christian civilization may claim superiority to other types. In a word, the supreme boon of the Parliament has been the broadening of religious sympathies, the removal of preju-

dices and misunderstandings, the unfolding of common moral and spiritual ideas and ideals, the whole inevitably making for the Brotherhood of Man to a degree unprecedented in the history of civilization. Small wonder, therefore, that since the Parliament many a minor "congress of religious liberals" should have been formed, and that the movement toward religious unity should have taken noteworthy forward steps. Year by year the seemingly fixed sectarian barriers are being removed. Just now a distinguished English Congregational minister has received and accepted a call to one of the leading Presbyterian churches of this city, and a Baptist preacher of exceptional power is about to make the transition to Congregationalism without any theological catechizing whatsoever. Sunday evening meetings under the auspices of Unitarian, Universalist and Reformed Jewish societies furnish further illustration of the new spirit and tendency in the religious world, albeit that these meetings are devoted exclusively to social questions and that the religious differences are religiously ignored.

Who knows but that through this medium the sectarian sores, which, when touched, always cause the sectarian nerves to respond, will be healed, leaving not even a scar to indicate and recall the conflicting creeds. Nobler than the unity which is "Christian" or "Jewish" is the non-sectarian unity which is Human and which extends the amenities of a platform for the promotion of civic righteousness to one for the realization of religious brotherhood. It is not enough to be brothers and sisters "in Christ"; we must be brothers and sisters in Humanity with all the rest of mankind. Nor is the advent of such a non-sectarian brotherhood, standing for fraternity in freedom, an empty, baseless dream. Just as fast as men and women of all persuasions grow to care more for the triumph of truth than they do for sectarian victory; as fast as they learn to attach a higher value to spiritual freedom than to tradition and adherence to creed or custom, so fast will the world witness that finest of all religious fellowships, which lifts it above all differences of creed,

color, class and race, to the sublime plane of that Universal Religion which we are just beginning to understand.

Herder, the German dramatist and Biblical critic, once compared the religions of mankind to the strings of a harp, each of which gives forth its own particular note, and the harmonious blending of all the notes producing a veritable symphony of religions.

In this course of lectures we shall listen to the individual notes which the founders of six of the world's great religious systems have contributed to the symphony of religions. And since each one of the six "notes" is ethical rather than theological, since the prime concern of these founders was not with theological changes so much as with moral reform in the field of religion, we shall fix our attention upon their function as great moral leaders, touching only incidentally on their respective theological positions and claims.

II

GOTAMA, THE BUDDHA

II

GOTAMA, THE BUDDHA

OUR study of the great religious teachers of the East begins with the life and message of one who was born in India nearly twenty-five centuries ago.

India is a vast country, to be compared, not with Germany, or France, or Spain, but only with Europe itself, for India is as large as all Europe, excluding only Russia. Forty centuries ago this vast country was inhabited by a variety of ferocious tribes who were gradually conquered by a new and warlike people from beyond the Himalayas, on the table-lands of central Asia. These invaders called themselves "Aryas," *i.e.* lordly or worthy ones. They were gifted with poetic imagination, memory, language, keen intellectuality and, above all, with a strong religious instinct. While still a migratory people, prior to their invasion of India, they had composed hymns

(Vedas) in honor of the personified forces of Nature, to be sung as an accompaniment to the sacrifice of "soma"-juice and melted butter; — the singing and the sacrifice constituting their only forms of worship. These unsophisticated observers of Nature believed that within or behind every visible phenomenon there resided a Power responsible for all that occurs in connection with it and capable of affecting the life of man and beast for good or ill. Hence the personification and worship of these powers as manifested in the various forces and phenomena of Nature. At first there were only a few of these gods, but with the rise of distinctions such as that of "Bhaga," the sun before sunrise, "Surya," the risen sun, and "Savitri," the creating sun, the number of these personifications increased and, therefore, also, the number of sacrifices. It would carry us too far afield to trace the development of this primitive polytheism and worship. Suffice it to note that out of the original Aryan religion, with its simple "Vedic" hymns and sacrifices, there was evolved, by the

year 1000 B.C., an immense pantheon, an elaborate ceremonial, an ecclesiastical hierarchy, a caste system and a doctrine of the infallibility of the Vedas. Between the years 1000 and 500 B.C., religion in the valley of the Ganges (whither the descendants of the invading Aryas had migrated from the valley of the Indus) was marked by excessive devotion to the externalities of worship, by absorption in theological speculation and by the solid entrenchment of the caste system in the national life. And this was "Brahmanism." But, as always happens where a people becomes so engrossed in theology and ritual as to mistake theories and forms of religion for its essence, a reaction occurs, — away from ceremonies and speculations, to personal morality and service. Indeed, religious reform usually signifies, not that fault has been found with the ritual as such, but that the moral issues of life have suffered eclipse.

Precisely such a reform was inaugurated in India about the year 500 B.C. when Gotama (reared in that "Brahmanism" which grew

out of the primitive "Vedism") led a reactionary ethical movement, to be eventually known as "Buddhism." So successful was the reform-work of this great moral leader that within two hundred and fifty years of his death what he stood for became the state religion of India. Then followed a long, bitter, obstinate struggle between Buddhism and Brahmanism for the religious control of India, resulting in a counter-reformation of the latter and the complete expulsion of the former from India, to Ceylon and the islands of the Indian archipelago, whence it found its way to China, Thibet, Japan and other countries, there undergoing strange and varied transformations. Thus there occurred in ancient India a prototype of the Protestant Reformation and the Roman Catholic counter-reformation. For just as Martin Luther protested against certain evils in the Romanism in which he had been reared and in which he died, so Gotama inveighed against kindred evils in the Brahmanism in which he had been reared and in which he died. And precisely as



GOTAMA.

Luther's reform was followed by a counter-reformation within Romanism itself, led by Loyola and resulting in the reëstablishment of its lost prestige, so after Gotama's death Brahmanism underwent reform and succeeded in reinstating itself in India even to the entire exclusion of its rival.

The purpose of what has been thus far said is to provide the necessary setting for our study of Gotama's work, to indicate his place in the history of religion in ancient India, to show the precise part he played in effecting the transition from Brahmanism to Buddhism and the particular field in which he gained distinction as one of the great moral leaders of the Orient.

There were many "Buddhas" in ancient India, just as there were many "Christs" in ancient Palestine. The word "Buddha," like the word "Christ," is not the name of a man, but the title of an office. Buddha means "enlightened" and Christ means "anointed." Jesus was called the Christ because it was believed by certain Judean contemporaries that he was the long-expected "anointed one" who

would deliver Israel from the hand of the oppressor and restore the prosperity and peace of David's day. Jesus, they thought, was the "Messiah," and "Christ" is but the Greek equivalent for the Hebrew "Messiah." Similarly Gotama was called "the Buddha" because it was believed that he had shed new light on the path of salvation and therefore was worthy to be called "the enlightened one." Other names by which he is known in literature are the following: "Siddhartha," the name given him by his father and signifying one in whom wishes are fulfilled; "Bhagavat," fortunate or blessed; "Tathagata," as his predecessors; "Çakya-muni," monk of the Çakya tribe. He was born about 550 B.C. in Kapilavastu, a small town eighty miles north of Benares, in the valley of the Ganges, the hottest civilized land on the globe, home of that pessimism which has ever been characteristic of Brahmanic and Buddhistic thought. Here climate, environment and economic conditions conspire to breed philosophical pessimism. Nowhere else in the world does Nature

exhibit so malignant a mien. Here floods do their devastating work upon farms and homes; here drought, lasting in the monsoon time for six months or more, is followed by famine, cholera and plague; here pythons and venomous snakes annually decimate the population, while tigers claim their victims by the thousand. Small wonder that here the belief should obtain that life is essentially evil and to be somehow escaped. Great wonder it is that this Aryan stock should remain to this day, despite their inimical environment, a most remarkable people; that though their bodies suffer from dyspepsia, dysentery, diabetes and various forms of hysteria, their mentality has not suffered, but gives promise of working out the tremendous social, political and economic problems of the country.

The story of Gotama's life has been delightfully told by Sir Edwin Arnold, in his "Light of Asia," a poetical version which, while making free use of legendary material, presents the man and his message in such wise that the reader readily orients himself and enters into

the thought, aim and spirit of the great reformer.

We shall not have time to analyze this classic and, by reference to the original documents, separate the legendary from the historical portions of the narrative. Suffice it merely to state that the "higher criticism" of the Buddhist Scriptures — the ultimate source of information on which all biographers draw — is still at work on the task of determining how much of what is there recorded can be accepted as trustworthy, just as in the case of the gospels of the New Testament the higher criticism is engaged in a corresponding problem touching what may be believed concerning Jesus.

Born into the "ruler" caste, which, together with the priestly, warrior and laborer castes, constituted the original four divisions of the system, the young Gotama was reared under most favorable conditions, provided with all that wealth and social position could supply and shielded to the utmost possible extent from acquaintance with unpleasant or painful

experiences. But, one day, so the story goes, while driving in the royal park he saw in quick succession three most pitiable and distressing sights. First, an aged man, feeble, trembling, tottering helplessly to the ground. Next, the victim of a loathsome leprous disease, hideous to behold. And then, a funeral procession. Returning home at once, Gotama resolved to find a way of escape from infirm old age, disease and death. The third book of the "Light of Asia" closes with a graphic description of this resolve, the intense, passionate yearning with which this youth of twenty-three faced the task he set himself to fulfil.

"Oh, suffering world;
Oh, known and unknown of my common flesh,
Caught in this common net of death and woe,
And life which binds to both! I see, I feel,
The vastness of the agony of earth,
The vainness of its joys, the anguish of its worst;
Since pleasures end in pain, and youth in age,
And love in loss, and life in hateful death,
And death in unknown lives, which will but yoke
Men to their wheel again to whirl the round
Of false delights and woes that are not false.
Me too this lure hath cheated, so it seemed

Lovely to live, and life a sunlit stream
Forever flowing in a changeless peace;
Whereas the foolish ripple of the flood
Dances so lightly down by bloom and lawn
Only to pour its crystal quicklier
Into the foul salt sea. The veil is rent
Which blinded me. I am as all these men
Who cry upon their gods and are not heard,
Or are not heeded — yet there *must* be aid!
For them and me and all there must be help!
Perchance the gods have need of help themselves,
Being so feeble that when sad lips cry
They cannot save! I would not let one cry
Whom I could save. How can it be that Brahm
Would make a world and keep it miserable,
Since, if, all-powerful, he leaves it so,
He is not good, and if not powerful,
He is not God."

And so, under the spell of these philosophical reflections Gotama went forth, leaving wife and child, to find the coveted way of escape. For six years he was a homeless wanderer, going from one hermit to another, hoping thus to acquire the practical knowledge that would save mankind. Such procedure seems strange to us, but we must remember that in those days there were no printed books by which one could come in touch with scholar-

ship. One's only resource was to visit the recluses who had retired to their respective "retreats" to work out their problems in philosophy and religion. This, indeed, was a common practice of the time among the various sects of the country, climate and environment lending themselves exceptionally well to forest meditation and study. But the conviction was at last borne in upon Gotama that these intellectual searchings brought no solution for his problem. Philosophical speculation, he concluded, is not the medium through which the needed light can shine. He then turned to asceticism, in accordance with an ancient oriental belief that starvation is conducive to mentality; the less one eats the more vigorous and keen one's power to think. Self-mortification, it was believed, superinduces a thought-power so great as to elicit from the gods a revelation of the truth. But after faithful, prolonged devotion to the ascetic life, even to the verge of physical collapse, Gotama concluded that not by this avenue any more than by that of speculation

can one hope to reach a solution of the problem.

Finally, while seated one day in deep meditation under a lotus-tree, since known as the "bodhi" (enlightenment) tree, the long-sought solution came, and it was promptly developed into an orderly, systematic body of beliefs and precepts. Gathering about him a small band of disciples, Gotama, for the remaining forty-five years of his life, devoted himself to preaching and spreading his gospel until, at the ripe old age of eighty years, he died, leaving to his immediate followers the task of continuing the missionary work so successfully begun. Thus, while Heraclitus and Pythagoras in Greece were shaping their philosophies, while Nehemiah and his associates were reorganizing the Hebrew nation in Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity, while Confucius was fulfilling the part of statesman and moralist in China, the founder of Buddhism was protesting against certain errors and evils in the Brahmanism in which he had been brought up and supplementing his protest with a positive,

constructive gospel of escape from a world in which suffering, sorrow, disease and death were the common lot.

The simple ceremonial of "Vedism" had developed into an elaborate and expensive ritual. Asceticism had come to be regarded as a virtue of the highest type and even a programme of physical austerities had been worked out. The caste system had grown increasingly and obnoxiously exclusive. Speculation on the hereafter had become so engrossing as to cause neglect of the practical humanities. Nay, more, the popular philosophy of the period was found to be defective, so that the hope of salvation rested on insecure foundations. Against these features of the religion into which he was born Gotama now registered his protest. He denounced the costly ritual as wasteful and unethical. He repudiated asceticism as a practice inimical to the health of both body and mind. He pronounced the caste system degrading and undemocratic. Intellectual speculation on the finale of man's career, he deprecated as being both futile and

unwarranted. The belief in the existence of "Brahma," — a permanent and supreme Power, the soul of the universe,—the belief in the existence of a "soul" in man, as an entity, capable of transmigration at death, the belief in man's ultimate absorption into "Brahma," — all these theological beliefs he regarded as superstitions, unworthy the support of enlightened people. Such, in brief, was the protest of Gotama on its negative side and had it ended there, no Buddhism would have been born. For no movement can ever live that is built solely upon negations. No future ever awaits a cause grounded upon iconoclasm. Every religious system that survives and perpetuates itself does so only on the basis of its affirmations. Nor have we a more conspicuous contemporary instance of this truth than that furnished by the Ethical Culture Movement itself. Thirty-four years ago its distinguished founder supplemented a series of emphatic protests against current beliefs and practices, with a positive, constructive programme, putting something in the place of

everything he took away. And to this, its affirmative gospel, the Movement owes its life.

Similarly the survival of Buddhism would have been impossible but for the genius of its founder in following up his series of negations with a corresponding set of affirmations. In place of a dry and forbidding ritual he offered a fervent and inspiring morality. For asceticism and sensualism alike, he substituted temperance, adding to the persuasive eloquence with which he preached it, the more potent influence of personal example. To do away with the degrading and undemocratic caste system he proposed the ennobling, inclusive doctrine of brotherhood. For vain speculation on insoluble questions he substituted a practical course in ethical self-discipline. The belief in the infallibility of the Vedas, he surrendered in favor of belief in enlightened reason as our safest guide. As against the notion that the gods can influence human affairs, he took the ground that the gods, no less than men, are subject to the law of

"Karma" and that far from having his fate determined by the dictum of any god, man has the determination of his fate in his own hands, in strict accordance with that law.

Before proceeding to the interpretation of this law, let me confirm what has just been said concerning the constructive gospel of Gotama by a few citations from the "Pitakas," the fountain-source of information on Buddhism, precisely as the New Testament is the fountain-source of information on Christianity. The word "Pitakas" means baskets and as here used refers to those archæological excavations which are conducted with the aid of baskets handed on from workman to workman standing in a long line from the spot whence the earth is removed to that where it is deposited for examination. So a long line of teachers and pupils have handed on the treasures of Buddhistic teaching in "Pitakas" of which there are three, the *Vinaya*, or rules of discipline for the order of monks, the *Dhamma*, or the ethical sermons preached by Gotama, and the *Abhiddamma*, or the metaphysical and

psychological background of this ethical teaching. Like the Vedas the Pitakas were transmitted orally for centuries, trained repeaters memorizing and transmitting them, until 250 B.C., when King Asoka ordered them to be committed to writing. The quotations selected indicate the views of Gotama on the caste system, asceticism, temperance and reliance on reason as contrasted with external authority and tradition: —

"My doctrine makes no distinction between high and low, rich and poor, it is like the sky, it has room for all and like water it washes all alike.

" Ananda coming to a well asked a girl of the despised caste of the Tschandalas for a drink of water. But she, fearing a gift from *her* hands would make him unclean, declined. Whereupon Ananda said: My sister, I did not ask concerning thy caste or thy family, I beg water of thee if thou canst give it to me. To him in whom love dwells the whole world is but one family. Hatred is never overcome by hatred, this is an ancient rule. The greatest victor is

he who conquers himself. Overcome evil with good and lying with truth. As the lotus-flower rises immaculate from the muddy water of the marsh, so a man may rise from the impurity of the surrounding world. Not abstinence from fish or meat, not wearing rough garments, not offering sacrifices, can make a man pure. Your low desires are in you and you make your outside clean.

"And the Blessed One thus addressed the five Bhikkhus (disciples): There are two extremes, O Bhikkhus, which he who has given up the world ought to avoid. What are these two extremes? A life given to pleasures and lusts, for this is degrading, sensual, vulgar; and a life given to mortifications, for this is painful, ignoble, and profitless. By avoiding these two extremes, O Bhikkhus, the Tathâgata has gained the knowledge of the Middle Path which leads to insight, which leads to wisdom, which conduces to calm, to knowledge, to Nirvana.

"And the Blessed One, calling his disciples unto him, delivered unto them this commandment:—

"Go ye forth, O brethren, and wander over the world, for the sake of the many, for the welfare of the many, out of compassion for the world, for the good and the weal and the gain of gods and men. . . . Proclaim the teaching lovely in its origin, lovely in its progress, and lovely in its consummation, both in the spirit and in the letter. Set forth the higher life in all its fulness and in all its purity.

"Be ye lamps unto yourselves, betake yourselves to no external refuge. Hold fast to the truth as a lamp, hold fast as a refuge to the truth. Whosoever shall be a lamp unto themselves, looking not for refuge to any one besides themselves, it is they who shall reach the topmost height.

"Behold now. I exhort you, brethren: work out your own salvation with diligence." This was the last word of the Blessed One.[1]

Karma and reincarnation connote ideas common to both Brahmanism and Buddhism and are inseparably associated in their respective theories of human progress. Without paus-

[1] Sacred Books of the East, Vol. X, p. 146 *sq.*

ing to differentiate these theories, let it suffice simply to indicate the source of the belief in reincarnation. It derives directly from the Vedic religion of the primitive Aryans. Speculating on death and what comes after death, the successors of the poet-priests who composed the "Rig-Veda" could not find entire satisfaction in their conception of future reward as immortal residence among the gods in paradise. They grew sceptical and nervous about the continuance of their life in heaven. What if the good deeds done on earth warrant only a limited life of bliss among the gods? What if, over there, instead of eternal life there be death again, the good deeds having only temporary value and not guaranteeing immortality at all? In that case there will surely be death again, and if man can die in heaven once, why not many times? From such reflections it was but a single step to the belief that the law of compensation operates, not in the unknown heaven, but here on the familiar earth, death and rebirth occurring again and again until sin and virtue have adequately and

completely received their respective punishment and reward, each death followed by rebirth into a condition determined by the net result of conduct in all earlier lives. Thus in the course of practically endless reincarnations the average man gets his deserts, until at last there is release from the round of deaths and rebirths. And this is salvation or "Nirvana," the cessation of rebirth into an evil, sorrowing, suffering, death-destined world.

In the evolution of this theory of reincarnation the doctrine of Karma played an indispensable and inalienable part. For Karma means not only deed, but also the effect of deed on the subsequent character of the doer. The thinking and the thought, the doing and the act, all pass away, but not without leaving enduring traces on the character. These are called "samskaras" *i.e.* deed-structures, the direct product of Karma. Actions are like seeds that bear fruit, some early, some late, in the course of man's successive rebirths.

For, according to *Buddhistic* belief, as we have just seen, when a man dies, he is reborn

into precisely the condition he has deserved as a result of his conduct in earlier lives, and he continues to be reborn until he has been fully punished for every sin and fully rewarded for every virtue. Every act produces its samskara and the preservation of the samskaras makes rebirth possible, Karma being the mysterious law which binds each life to the one next preceding it. Moreover, no one has any recollection of a previous existence, and therefore no one has any knowledge as to how his moral account stands or as to what his next incarnation will be. But let him live the unselfish life, let him undergo a systematic course of self-discipline such as the Buddha outlined, and after successive reincarnations, he will have "squared" his moral account and for him rebirth will cease. Thus by a process of "automatic, psychic evolution" man reaches at last the state called "Nirvana," saved forever after from the possibility of rebirth.

Such, in brief, bare outline is the exoteric doctrine of Karma and reincarnation, as taught by Gotama. Exoteric, not esoteric, it most

assuredly was. Not veiled, but naked truth did he wish to teach, as is clearly and conclusively proved by the following passage from that part of the "Pitakas" called the "Book of the Great Decease," a passage that shows how misleading is the notion to which A. P. Sinnett gave currency in his "Esoteric Buddhism."

"I have preached the truth without making any distinction between exoteric and esoteric doctrine; for in respect of the truth, Ananda, the Tathâgata has no such thing as the closed fist of a teacher who keeps some things back. It may be, brethren, that there may be doubt or misgiving in the mind of some brother as to the Buddha, or the truth, or the path. Enquire freely, brethren, do not have to reproach yourselves afterwards with the thought, our teacher was face to face with us and we failed to enquire of the Blessed One when we were thus face to face with him." [1]

In the one hundred and eighty-six dialogues that have come down to us, his theory of sal-

[1] Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XI, pp. 36, 113.

vation is fully expounded, and to these I must refer you for details upon which time fails me to touch. Fundamental to his scheme of salvation is acceptance and appreciation of "the four noble truths." However much Buddhists may differ on other points, they all are agreed on these. To quote the language of Gotama as recorded in the Pitakas: "It is through not understanding and grasping four noble truths, O brethren, that we have had to run so long, to wander so long in this weary path of reincarnation, both you and I. And what are these four?

"First: The noble truth about *suffering*. Birth is painful, disease is painful, death is painful, contact with the unpleasant is painful and painful is separation from the pleasant.

"Second: The noble truth about the *cause* of suffering. Verily it is this thirst or craving, causing the renewal of existence, the craving for the gratification of the passions, or the craving for a future life, or for success in this life.

"Third: The noble truth of the *cessation* of

suffering. Verily it is the quenching of this very thirst, the laying aside of this thirst.

"Fourth: The noble truth concerning *the path* that leads to the cessation of suffering. Verily it is the noble eightfold path, viz.: —

"1. Right views: free from superstition or delusion.

"2. Right aims: high and worthy of an intelligent, earnest man.

"3. Right speech: kindly, open, truthful.

"4. Right conduct: peaceful, honest, pure.

"5. Right livelihood: bringing hurt or danger to no living thing.

"6. Right effort: in self-training or in self-control.

"7. Right mindfulness: the active, watchful mind.

"8. Right contemplation: earnest thought on the deep mysteries of life," — Karma, Samskaras, etc.

How tame and prosaic this list must have seemed to a people steeped in ceremonialism, fasting and penances! How tame and prosaic, perchance, it appears to us unless we

happen to know all that is involved in each of the eight steps on "the noble path." As an index of their wealth of ethical and philosophical content let me synopsize the first of the eight, "Right Views," as expounded at length in the forty-third dialogue and, more briefly, in the ninth. The man of right views is free from superstition, free from erroneous theories of the world, God and the soul. He realizes the impermanence of everything and of every being, whether human or divine. He knows that nothing permanently *is*, that everything *becomes*, that the world-stuff is eternal, that out of it all things and beings came, we know not how; and that it is a foolish waste of time to try to find out, because the main concern of men should be to attain "Arahatship," that blessed state attainable, here on earth, in which, as a result of faithful allegiance to the eightfold noble path one is prepared for Nirvana and saved from the possibility of rebirth. The man of right views understands that while it is legitimate to argue from one cause to the next, he cannot hope to reach an ultimate

cause. Life he knows is a wheel, causation a chain, beginning with ignorance, "unconscious productive ignorance" (the unconscious "will to live") from which spring consciousness, sensation, thirst, attachment, birth, suffering, old age, death, rebirth; Karma, the fruit of one's deeds, being the link that binds each life with its predecessor. The man of right views understands that there is no reality corresponding to "soul" as a permanent, human entity, and that the notion of its final absorption into Brahma, the Oversoul, is also erroneous. For this latter, he knows to be just as unreal as the soul. Again, the man of right views understands what is evil and what is good and the roots of each. He knows the basis of bodily and mental life, how they originate and how they ultimately cease. As a result, he gets rid of sensuality and of ill-will toward others. Moreover, he knows what suffering is, its cause and its cessation, how it is bound up with the temporary individuality that results from the evanescent union of the five "Skandas" or groups of qualities that make

up each individual (corporeity, consciousness, sensations, feelings, desires). He knows how sufferings result from desire and how it ceases only after he has entered on the eightfold noble path at the entrance to which are the four noble truths. He perceives the "fetters," or failings, all of which are sloughed off in "Arahatship," the vestibule of Nirvana. And when he knows all this his insight is right, his views are correct and the man is endowed with an abiding sense of truth.

Thus the philosophy of Gotama is fundamentally pessimistic. The world is evil and the problem is to escape rebirth into such a world. Behind the programme of ethical self-discipline lies the utilitarian motive of escape, to be contrasted with that higher and only worthy motive, viz., to approximate an ideal that gives worth to life. In the dialogue on "Right Aims" Gotama ranks them according to their relative worth, placing mere physical sustenance lowest in the scale of aims and rating highest of all the emancipation of the heart from lust, ill-will and all forms of hatred and

selfishness. And, again, by "Right Effort," he did not mean the kind that insures material success, but rather a steady, persistent, unflagging endeavor to make progress in the ethical zone of our being. Differ from Gotama as we may, in his theory of the universe and of the soul, in his doctrine of Karma and reincarnation and in the pessimism whence these originate, yet when he affirms that to live the ethical life is the sole and certain guarantee of welfare now and in any other world that may await us we all respond with a sincere and hearty "amen."

So bent was the Buddha on turning men's thoughts away from fruitless speculation on the location and nature of Nirvana to the crying needs of the living present that he refused again and again to answer the question, Where and what is Nirvana? Invariably he pointed to the path that leads thither, bidding the inquirer concentrate upon the eight prerequisites of salvation. In the same spirit and from a like motive Jesus, when asked "Are there few that be saved?" replied,

"Strive to enter in." Be not anxiously concerned about the population of heaven, but rather seek so to live as to be worthy of residence there.

Nowhere in the "Pitakas" do we find Nirvana defined in positive terms. Gotama's allusions to it, as recorded in the Buddhist Bible, are all negative. No wonder, then, that speculation became rife as to the meaning he gave the word. In Sanskrit and Pali dictionaries it is simply a generic term for "salvation" and, as such, admits of various specific interpretations. Childers and Oldenberg are of the opinion that to Gotama Nirvana meant annihilation. Max Müller contended that it described an "absolute peace of soul of which the repose of the saint is a foretaste." Rhys-Davids holds that the term signifies a perfection to be attained in this life and has nothing to do with the hereafter. But Gotama gave out no positive information, describing Nirvana simply as that blessed state in which rebirth is forever impossible. This much, however, we are warranted in saying: if there

be conscious personal survival of death, then the very most that Nirvana could mean for us would be "a temporary resting-place for tired souls." Once rested and refreshed, we would wish to resume our climb, for life is not static but dynamic, imperfect, incomplete; nor is there any place for a doctrine of rest save one that is harmonious with the possibility of endless growth toward that image of the perfect in which we all were potentially made. Only such a spiritual conception of life can be worthy our acceptance, looking on each new height to which we climb as only the vantage ground from which we ascend to some higher manifestation of power, the spiritual content of our life enriched and deepened with every new altitude we attain.

Gotama's aversion to discussing Nirvana was matched by his distaste for dealing with theism. For this, too, seemed to him an insoluble problem. So far as the Buddhism of Gotama is concerned, it was practically atheistic in that he recognized no supreme deity but only the various gods of the Brahmanic

pantheon (Indra, Agni, Savitri, etc.), and as these, like human beings, were subject to the law of Karma and rebirth, worship of them was obviously impossible. "Better," he said, "homage to a man grounded in the Dhamma than to Agni for a hundred years." The place above all finite deities Gotama left vacant, holding that a solution of the theistic problem lies outside the pale of human possibilities.

Clearly, then, the message of this great oriental leader was essentially ethical, practical, humanitarian. And this is all the more apparent when we turn to his ten commandments. Comparing them with the Decalogue of the Old Testament we note:—

1. "Ye shall slay no living thing" = "thou shalt not kill."

2. "Ye shall not take that which is not given" = "thou shalt not steal."

3. "Ye shall not act wrongfully touching the bodily desires" = "thou shalt not commit adultery."

4. "Ye shall speak no lie" — no equivalent in the Decalogue.

5. "Ye shall drink no maddening drink" — no equivalent in the Decalogue.

These five were binding on clergy and laity alike, but the remaining five were imposed on the clergy alone: —

6. "Accept no gold or silver."

7. "Shun luxurious beds."

8. "Abstain from late meals."

9. "Avoid public amusements."

10. "Abstain from expensive dress."

One is led to wonder why three of these five were not made equally binding upon the laity. But so far as our western civilization is concerned we all must agree that they might well be added to the Decalogue and given a place in that compilation of universal ethical commandments to which each of the world's great religions contributes a share. Nor is this all that may be said as to the practical bearing of Gotman's gospel upon the moral needs of the modern Occident. In these days of theological reconstruction, when men and women of affluence and influence are seen selling their intellectual birthright for the pottage of social

position, popular favor and business success, supporting by their presence and purse churches whose creeds they disown, the need is to hear again the powerful plea of Gotama that men should be sincere and free in their religious thinking, "betake themselves to no external refuge, but hold fast to the truth as to a lamp." In these days of high living and low thinking on the part of thousands, immersed as they are in a practical materialism, which means gratification of the senses, creature-comforts and starvation of the spirit, what better thing can we do than point to Gotama's teaching on temperance, the "middle path" which steers clear of sensualism and asceticism alike, and "which leads to insight, to wisdom, and to calm"? In these days when snobbishness, class pride and exclusiveness reveal the un-American elements in our civilization, surely we do well to recall the ringing words of India's prophet of democracy: "My religion makes no distinction between high and low, rich and poor. It is like the sky; it has room for all and, like water, it washes all alike. To

him in whom love dwells the whole world is but one family."

By putting his emphasis on character rather than on creed, on temperance as superior to asceticism and the safeguard against sensualism; by presenting the "brotherhood of man" as the ideal human relationship; by fixing attention on this life and its pressing needs and refusing to answer questions concerning the hereafter; by teaching that "every man must work out his own salvation with diligence," Gotama, the Buddha, bequeathed to the race precepts and an example that will be an inspiration for all peoples and for all time.

III

ZOROASTER

III

ZOROASTER

FORTY centuries ago the ancestors of Gotama, the Buddha, migrated to India from beyond the Himalayas, near the sources of the river Oxus. Prior to this migration there was a period known as the "Indo-Iranian," Iran being the name of ancient Persia. A prehistoric period it is, in which the Indians and the Iranians occupied common ground, spoke a common language and had one and the same religion. Back of this period, again, was the "Indo-European," when the language, literature and religion of those who came to be known as Hindus,. Parsees, Greeks, Romans, Teutons, Celts, Slavs, were one. In other words, from the original Aryan home on the tablelands of central Asia there spread in seven successive migrations the tribes that have peopled Europe and most

of Asia. Of these migrations the two earliest were those to India in the southwest and to Persia in the southeast. A romantic interest attaches to these separated peoples who, soon after settling down on either side of the great central Asiatic mountain-chain, lost all consciousness of their kinship and of the fact that they once had a common home. The Hindu "Vedas" know nothing of the Persian "Avesta," nor does the latter show any knowledge of what was going on across the Himalaya mountains in India. Yet we can translate the language of the one people into that of the other by an easy system of sound changes. In the course of several centuries the religion of these two peoples became increasingly unlike. Hinduism is monistic, pessimistic, speculative; bent on finding a way of escape from the weary round of existences and believing it is found in realizing that Brahma, the soul of the universe, is the only true and permanent reality, and that all human finite souls are but passing realities, to be absorbed at last into Brahma through this very realization of their own im-

permanence and the perpetuity of Brahma alone. The Persian religion is dualistic, optimistic, unphilosophic, yet deeply ethical and spiritual, and has produced very superior types of human life.

Thus the primitive Aryan religion diverging in two directions, resulted in the religion of ancient India and that of ancient Persia. And just as the warm, benignant climate and the rich fruitful soil of western India fostered a brooding, speculative tendency, giving the religion of the country that characteristic against which Gotama protested, so the less favorable environment of Iran necessitated industry, precluded speculation and gave to the religion of the country the unique emphasis which it puts on work and the relation of work to "salvation."

Persia's place among the nations of antiquity was second only to that of Greece and Rome. As an index of her greatness recall the fact that in the fifth century before our era she had come into possession of Assyria and Babylonia and held the Hebrews under her sway both at home

and abroad. Egypt, Scythia, India, Greece, all were politically controlled by "edicts" from the Persian capital. So great was Persia's power at this time that the late Max Müller went so far as to say that if the battles of Marathon and Salamis had been lost to Greece, Zoroastrianism, which was the state religion of the Persian empire, would have become the religion of the civilized world. In other words, if by the grace of the Persian god, Ahura-Mazda, Darius had been victorious over Alexander the Great, belief in the Olympian deities and myths would never have replaced the teachings of Zoroaster. But Persia did not go down to permanent defeat. A thousand years later she was once more in the ascendant, till the year 641, when the Mohammedan invasion established Islam where Zoroastrianism had reigned. The great majority of the faithful refused to accept the new religion and were forthwith punished with exile. They found a refuge in the northwestern part of India, now known as the presidency of Bombay. There, to-day, one may see the

descendants of those exiles, numbering nearly 100,000 souls; a people world-renowned for their intellectual and moral worth and for the perfervid enthusiasm with which they perpetuate the religion of their fathers; a religion that has contributed several important doctrines to Christianity, through Judaism; a religion that has left its solemn record, not only in the pages of the "Avesta" and on the giant ruins at Persepolis, but also in the high-toned lives of the Zoroastrian colony at Bombay. On the influence of this religion upon New Testament theology we shall not have time to dwell. Suffice it only to say that the angelology, demonology, eschatology and doctrine of rewards and punishments, found in the Christian Bible are closely related to the teaching of the Avesta and in some measure traceable to that source.

Carlyle once said, "Great men have short biographies." In the case of Zoroaster we have the shortest of all. Less is known of him than of any other of the great moral leaders of the Orient. The "Spend-Nask," of the Avesta,

which contained the story of his life has been almost entirely lost. Meagre as is the authentic information we have concerning Jesus, what we positively know about Zoroaster is still less. Legends there are, corresponding to those of the New Testament Apocrypha, and precisely as these produced doubt of the historicity of Jesus, so the earlier legends gave rise to the suspicion that no such person as Zoroaster ever lived. But this extreme position is not generally accepted among scholars, for Zoroaster is too deeply rooted in tradition to be wholly discredited. Moreover these very legends testify, as does nothing else, to the essential greatness of his personality. He is represented as holding intercourse with the deity. At his appearance all Nature rejoices. He enters into conflict with demons and drives them off the face of the earth. Angro-Mainyus (Satan) approaches, tempting him to renounce his religion. The Gods initiate him into his prophetic office and act as guardians throughout his public career.[1] Say what we will of these

[1] Yasht, 13, 17. Vendidad, 19.



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legends the fact remains that no such wonder stories are ever told of men of ordinary mould.

The name Zoroaster is a corruption of "Zarathushtra," and signifies "possessor of camels." His father's name was Pourushaspa, a member of the Çpitama family. Neither the place, year, month nor day of his birth is known. A double tradition regarding his birthplace warrants us in believing that Bactria, the modern Afghanistan, was the province in which he was born, though the testimony is conflicting as to the town. The date of his birth has been set as far back as 6000 B.C. and as far forward as 300 B.C. and though scholarship is still divided on the subject, there is an increasing tendency to regard 600 B.C. as approximately correct. From the "Gathas" (the earliest portion of the Avesta) we learn that Zoroaster was a husband and a father, a warrior and a farmer. He also is recorded the legend of his "call" to become a moral leader, reformer and founder of a new religion. One day, so the story reads, the cry of the oppressed peasants of Bactria went up

to Heaven. The celestial host hearing the cry promptly held a conference at the throne of the supreme god Ahura Mazda. Whereupon it was voted to call Zoroaster to deliver the oppressed people. But, on receiving the divine summons, he hesitates, as did Gotama and Jesus, on the eve of their assuming the prophetic rôle. Finally Zoroaster accepts the call and goes forth to preach the will of Ahura Mazda, as against that of the false gods (devas) of the oppressors who promptly became "devils" (dacvas) in the eyes of the Zoroastrians. From the Gathas, too, we learn of the poor success that attended Zoroaster's first public preaching and of his visit to King Vishtaspa, who gave him his patronage and protection, who "broke with his weapon a path for the truth" and became the arm and support of the Zoroastrian faith, raising it to power and spreading it abroad.[1]

As the representative of Ahura Mazda, Zoroaster is the first annunciator of that moral triad which constitutes the corner-stone of the

[1] Yasht, 13.

faith: "humata, hukhta, hvarshta" — good thoughts, good words, good deeds. In that same capacity Zoroaster is the first priest of the sacred fire. Just here let me interject a word of caution against the popular habit of regarding the Parsees as "fire-worshippers." That is as serious a mistake as to call the Buddhists "idol-worshippers," the Hindus "sun-worshippers," or the Christians "cross-worshippers." When the Hindu said, "O Savitri, thou Sun," he was not thinking of the fiery ball that rises over the Himalayas and sets behind the Indus, but rather of the power within or behind the sun, responsible for every function it fulfils. When the Christian kneels before his crucifix, it is simply as an aid to spiritual concentration, the real object of his worship being the Christ, or God, or the Virgin Mary, as the case may be. Similarly, to the Parsees fire serves a symbolical function. Well do I remember the language of the lamented Jeneghier D. Cola, the distinguished representative of Zoroastrianism at the World's Parliament of Religions, when discussing with

him the meaning of fire as a religious symbol. "While our eyes are fixed on the sacred flame our hearts are humbled before Ahura Mazda, our God." To the Parsees fire is the most perfect symbol of deity. Its purity, its power, its refulgence, its incorruptibility, its glory,— each of these suggests an attribute of their deity and so they keep the sacred flame constantly burning, as a helpful symbol, an aid in concentrating their thought upon their God. This choice of fire as the supreme symbol of deity illustrates the influence of environment upon religious ideas. Iran was a veritable fire-country, bespread with naphtha springs, surrounded by burning mountains, overhung with meteoric lights and stars that shone through the clear atmosphere so brilliantly as to seem articulate with spiritual meaning and suggestion. In the twenty-fourth "Yasht" of the Avesta we read of "the holy Zarathushtra," who first thought what was good, spoke what was good, did what was good; who was the first Priest, the first Warrior, the first Plougher of the ground; who first knew and first taught

the word of Holiness and obedience to the Word; who had a revelation of the Lord; in whose birth and growth the waters and plants rejoiced and all the creatures of the good creation cried out, Hail![1]

Just how the gospel of Zoroaster came to be differentiated from that of his Aryan brethren is still an open, unsolved question. Some years ago there was much promising speculation concerning it, and it is certain to be revived with the discovery of new material, as has occurred again and again since Duperron made his famous find in 1754. That the once twin peoples (Indian and Iranian) later quarrelled theologically, on matters of creed and ritual, no one doubts. In all probability the split harks back to the jealousy of the less favored community, reviling the local deity which showed favoritism to their more prosperous neighbor. But be this as it may, it is clear from certain passages in the Avesta that Zoroaster did not agree with those of his compatriots who regarded penances, prayers, sacrifices and fast-

[1] Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXIII, pp. 201–202.

ings as of paramount importance in religion, and who thought it right to pass half the day in begging food in order that the remainder might be spent under a shady tree in undisturbed meditation and prayer. From all this he recoiled, holding that prayer should always be a means, never an end; that work is the completing of prayer, the hands fulfilling the prayer of the heart; that industry is more than meditation and settled, agricultural life better than wandering, nomadic life. Such were the affirmations which supplemented the negations of Zoroaster's protest and insured the life of his reform. All who agreed with him settled down on the plains of Iran. For their encouragement and inspiration Zoroaster made known to them a great saying which he declared had been revealed to him by Ahura Mazda: "Four places on earth are most dear to me. First, where the sacred fire burns. Second, where homes are established, with wife and children, with fire and plenty. Third, where the most corn and fruit are raised. Fourth, where dry lands are irrigated and marshy lands drained."

What a mighty inspiration it must have been to those people, who had settled on a soil that required persistent and arduous labor to make it productive and life-sustaining, to hear that the very place of their abode was most pleasing to their God!

Small wonder that this great moral leader should advocate industry and teach the dignity, nay, the sacred efficacy of work. Turn to the "Vendidad," the "Leviticus" of the Avesta, and note there the emphasis laid on character and on work as a sacred duty.

"Contend constantly against evil, strive in every way to diminish the power of evil; strive to keep pure in body and mind and so prevent the entrance of evil spirits who are always trying to gain possession of men. Cultivate the soil, drain marshes, destroy dangerous creatures. He who sows the ground with diligence acquires more religious merit than he could gain by a thousand prayers in idleness. Diligence in thy occupation is the greatest good work. To sew patch on patch is better than begging rich men for clothing. The man

who has constantly contended against evil may fearlessly meet death. Death being a fact, have no fear of it, fear only not having lived well enough. Indulge not in slothful sleep lest the work which needs to be done remains undone. The cock lifts up his voice with every splendid dawn and cries: Arise, ye men, and destroy the demon that would put back the world in sleep. Long sleeping becomes you not, arise, 'tis day; who rises first comes first to paradise! In whom does Ahura Mazda rejoice? In him who adorns the earth with grain and grass, who dries up moist places and waters dry places. He who tills the ground is as good a servant of religion as he who offers ten thousand prayers in idleness. He is a holy man who has built him a home in which are wife and children and the sacred fire. Whoso cultivates barley cultivates virtue. When the wheat appears the demons hiss, when the grain is ripe they flee in rage. He who does not eat has not strength to live rightly nor to work." [1]

[1] Vendidad, XVIII, III.

These quotations show the emphasis placed by Zoroaster on work and also the reason for it. Work, according to his theory of the universe, is the most effective agent for destroying the power of Angro Mainyus, the ultimate source of all evil in the world. Behind his ethics Zoroaster had a clear-cut theology the substance of which is that the universe is under the control of two opposing principles or powers, the one good, the other evil; the one, Ahura Mazda, or Ormuzd; the other, Angro Mainyus, or Ahriman. Ahura Mazda created the beautiful world of Nature and of Man. Then Angro Mainyus crept into the good creation and marred it by matching every beautiful thing with a counter-creation of something evil. The "Vendidad" opens with an account of this alternating process: "I, O Zarathushtra Spitama, made the first best place, which is Airyana Vaêjah; thereupon Añgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit) created a counter creation, a serpent in the river, and frost made by the demons. . . . The third place which I, Ahura Mazda, made the best was Mouru; thereupon

Añgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit) created a counter creation, which was backbiting and lust. . . . The fifth place which I, Ahura Mazda, made the best was Nisâya; thereupon, in opposition to it, Añgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit), full of death, created a counter creation, which was the curse of unbelief. . . . As the seventh place I, who am Ahura Mazda, created Vaêkereta, . . . thereupon, in opposition to it, Añgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit), full of death, created the evil fairy who clave to Keresaspa. . . . As the ninth place, I, who am Ahura Mazda, created Khneñta as the best . . . thereupon Añgra Mainyu (the Evil Spirit) created a counter creation, the inexpiable deed of Sodomy."

Note that Angro-Mainyus is not introduced as a creation of Ahura-Mazda. Just who created him, or whence he came, we are not told. This holds equally true of the Hebrew "Satan."

There is, then, this conflict between the two opposing powers. A great cleft runs through the entire world, dividing it into two realms,

the two controlling powers counter-balancing each other. Yet this dualism is neither absolute nor eternal. Rather is it "an episode in the existence of Ormuzd," for he is the supreme and only god; omnipresent, omniscient, but not yet omnipotent, because coeval with him, though not coeternal, is Ahriman. In other words, Zoroaster's dualism is temporary. He was fundamentally a monotheist, believing (as did Jesus) that a deliverer from all evil, a "Saoshyant," or Messiah, would finally come and God's (Ahura-Mazda's) kindgom be all in all. At his advent the great "world-fire" will be started. In molten metal will all good souls be painlessly perfected and all wicked ones be utterly consumed, but to the pure, "it will seem as though they were bathing in warm milk." Then will the eternal Kingdom of the Good be ushered in and eternal bliss bless a renovated world. In the "Gathas" we read: "Now will I proclaim to you who are drawing near and wish to be taught those things that pertain to Him who knows all things. And I pray that propitious results

may be seen. Hear ye then with your ears, awake ye to our teaching!"

"The primeval spirits who as a pair have been famed of old are a better and a worse as to thought, word and deed. Between these two let the wisely-acting choose aright. Choose ye not as the evildoers! . . . And when the great struggle shall have been fought out then, O Mazda, the Kingdom shall have been gained for Thee! And may we be such as those who bring on this great renovation and make the world progressive till its perfection shall have been reached. And when perfection shall have been attained, then will the blow of destruction fall upon the Demon of Falsehood, but swiftest in the happy abode of Ahura, the righteous saints shall gather. Wherefor, O ye men, learn the blessings that are in store for the righteous." [1]

According to Zoroaster, then, the world is a battle-field on which every human being is a soldier, fighting on the side of Ahura-Mazda and his archangels and angels, or on the side

[1] Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXXI, pp. 28–35.

of Angro-Mainyus and his archdemons and demons. The weapons used by the good soldiers are not swords but ploughshares; not guns, but good thoughts, good words, good deeds.

Over against the heavenly host stands the infernal host, each led by a commander-general, the object of the war being to gain possession of the soul of man. True, man was created by the good spirit, Ahura-Mazda, but it was as a free moral agent that He created him. Thus man, being susceptible to evil, may range himself on the evil side of the war, or on the good, identify himself with Ahriman or with Ormuzd and according as he chooses so will the issue be, for without man's coöperation victory remains a dream.

If we could have asked Zoroaster the first question in the Presbyterian catechism, "What is the chief end of man?" his answer would have been, not that of the Christian, "to glorify God and enjoy Him forever," nor that of the Buddhist, — to walk the eightfold path of escape from rebirth. Rather would Zoroaster's answer have been: to help Ahura-Mazda

conquer the evil in the world, by work that shall keep pure the earth and the air, the body and the soul. The earth, he said, is a pure creation of God; keep it pure by tilling it and allowing no noxious weeds to grow. Water is a pure creation of God; do not pollute it by washing your hands or your linen in a running stream. If you see a corpse floating in a stream, remove it for it will pollute the water. Air is a pure creation of God; keep it pure by ventilation, by dissipating noxious gases and destroying noxious insects. Fire is a pure creation of God; keep it pure. Do not burn a dead body, lest you pollute the fire, do not bury it, lest you pollute the earth. How then, you ask, do the Parsees dispose of their dead? On the "Towers of Silence," — circular stone structures, open to the sky. There on the parapet of the tower vultures, dedicated for the purpose, congregate and devour the flesh of the dead, their bones falling through the steel gratings on which the bodies are laid, into a pit of quicklime below.

Believing in the sacred efficacy of work as

the most powerful means for annihilating the sway of Angro-Mainyus, Zoroaster prohibited fasting, self-torture, excessive grief, everything calculated to enervate the body or to reduce the power of the will. In direct contrast to the Hinduism which made asceticism a virtue, this great moral leader looked upon it as a sin, and rightly so. For asceticism means a waste of positive power, and one's life is never made noble and fine by wasting its opportunities, or by thwarting one's natural powers, or by crushing out normal desires. To be sure, in an age like ours, when a thousand things are inviting us to become immersed in the life of the senses, a measure of ascetic self-discipline is an excellent device for maintaining the balance of life. But, as a philosophy of life, asceticism falls short of the ideal, which is nothing less than the harmonious development of all the rich possibilities of our many-sided human nature in a rounded life.

One sin there was, according to Zoroaster, worse than fasting, nay, the deadliest sin of all — suicide. The reason for his utter con-

demnation of this sin was that no one should ever allow the sacred flame of enthusiasm for the victory of the good to die out in his heart, nor should one ever be willing to reduce by even a single soldier the valiant army of warriors fighting under Ahura-Mazda for the destruction of evil and its source. Stripped of its theological elements, where, I ask, shall we look for a worthier reason for self-preservation than this? What a contrast between Zoroaster's argument against suicide and Shakspere's based on the belief, as expressed by Hamlet, that in taking our life we may be fleeing from present ills to others worse than those we know. What a contrast again to the Buddhistic view, that suicide is to be spurned because it is useless, rebirth being inevitable. Only the Zoroastrian motive is worthy to serve in the class of true and adequate deterrents. When General Booth addressed the "Anti-Suicide League" of London, he drew, quite unconsciously, upon Zoroaster's double reason for denouncing suicide, holding this to be the sole valid motive to which

successful appeal can be made. We must stay here on earth to be of service, and countless are the ways in which we can serve.

Three commandments were given a supreme place in the moral code of Zoroaster: To speak the truth, to keep one's promises, and to keep out of debt. Ahriman is the father of lies and flourishes on the falsehoods of Ormuzd's children. Their unreliability and insolvency, wherever evidenced, increase the strength of Ahriman and tend to lengthen his days. Hence the emphasis on veracity, reliability and financial solvency as virtues fraught with power to promote the victory of Ormuzd over Ahriman.

As an additional agency for the sure and speedy triumph of the good principle, Zoroaster instituted an elaborate ceremonial, supplementing his gospel of work with ritualistic observances calculated to fortify the soul in its devotion to purity. In the "Vendidad" and in the "Vispered" of the Avesta, the forms and regulations of this ceremonial are recorded. As we read them we realize why it was that with all its ennobling and inspiring ethical

teaching Zoroaster's religion was disqualified for becoming a universal religion. It was because of this intensely local, elaborate, detailed scheme of ritual, together with the demands it exacted of the worshipper and the complicated character of the theology involved.

As a great moral leader Zoroaster brought to his people an ethics of personal life. To his hearers he said, in substance: Each one of you is a child of Ahura-Mazda. By birthright you belong to the Kingdom of the Good. You were created a free moral agent and are therefore at liberty to choose between good and evil. But on your choice will depend your salvation and the joy of sharing with Ahura-Mazda the ultimate victory of the good. Moreover, the strictest account is kept of your thoughts, words and deeds. On the judgment day these will be weighed in the balance and your eternal destiny determined. Hence, it behooves you to choose the good life. To help you in making the choice Zoroaster was sent, teaching that God's will is that the good triumph over evil and that each human soul

act as a coöperator with Him in the gigantic, age-long task of world redemption. Nor is there any higher source of inspiration for the conduct of life than just this conviction that you are coöperating with God unto this end, and that by so doing you are destined to share the joy in store for all who fight on the side of the sovereign lord, Ahura-Mazda.

What a contrast between this gospel of "up and doing" and the doctrine of meditation and fasting inculcated by the Brahmins when the Buddha came to inaugurate his reform. What a contrast, too, between the optimistic aim of Zoroaster and the pessimistic aim of Gotama. For, whereas the latter sought to overcome existence in order that suffering, sorrow and re-birth may be ended, Zoroaster sought to overcome evil in order that existence might be glorified and transfigured.

Concerning the hereafter Zoroaster's ideas were exceedingly definite and concrete. According to his theory, the soul, on the third night after the body's decease, arrives at "Chinvat," the Bridge of Reckoning, across

which lies the road to Paradise. Two angels make up the account, weighing the soul's good and evil deeds in "just balances" that vary not a hair's breadth for either kings or subjects. If the good deeds outweigh the evil, the bridge is easy of passage, and the man's conscience, in the form of a beautiful maiden, comes to meet him and conduct him to Paradise. But in the case of the wicked the bridge narrows to the width of a razor-blade and he falls off, plunging headlong into hell.[1] Should the good and the evil be equally balanced, the soul passes into an intermediate state of existence and its final destiny is not determined till the last judgment, when the "Saoshyant" will usher in the everlasting Kingdom of the Good.

The beneficent influence of Zoroaster's ethics is attested in the writings of Herodotus, who refers in glowing terms to the nobility and purity of Parsee life in the time of Darius. It is evidenced, again, in the lives of the ten

[1] Sacred Books of the East, Vol. XXIII, pp. 134 ff.; Vol. XXIV, pp. 258 ff.

thousand Zoroastrians in Afghanistan and also in the community at Bombay. Travellers tell us that these people exemplify to an exceptional degree the teachings of their Master. Truthfulness, temperance, industriousness, commercial integrity and chastity are characteristics of their life. In the cities where they live, it is said, one does not meet with drunken men nor with women of the town, — the degraded creatures that are seen on the streets of every Christian city. As for the generosity of the Parsees, it is unrivalled, extending far beyond the limits of Bombay. It went to Russia at the time of the Crimean War, when Florence Nightingale described the Zoroastrian colony as "the salt of the Bombay community." It went to France in 1859, when the terrible inundations necessitated the supplementing of local aid by foreign help, and the Parsees were among the first to respond and among the most liberal of the contributors. It went to the United States at the time of the Civil War, our Sanitary Commission receiving a handsome remembrance from the followers

of Zoroaster in India, sent, they said, because of their sympathy with the suffering soldiers and with the Cause of Freedom and union. A few decades ago an American Christian, Mr. George Peabody, held the record for generous giving to charity, but it was soon broken by a Bombay Parsee, who more than doubled the then record-gift. Such are some of the practical results of the gospel of him whose birthplace and birthday we do not know, the details of whose career we do not know, but from whom an influence went forth that has been felt for twenty-four centuries or more, a great moral leader from whose mind and heart there flowed a stream of inspiration that has made glad the waste places of unnumbered lives and made the desert of drudgery and difficulty to blossom as the rose. It may be that in your home and in mine there is no altar dedicated to the keeping of the sacred fire, but surely on the spiritual altar of our hearts we may keep the sacred fire of purity aflame so that our lives, too, may be aglow with good thoughts, good words, good deeds.

IV

CONFUCIUS AND LAO-TZE

IV

CONFUCIUS AND LAO-TZE

GOTAMA and Zoroaster belong to the Aryan branch of the human family, Confucius and Lao-Tze to the Turanian. Chief among the divisions of this branch is the Mongolian race of China; a people in whom the understanding has been more highly developed than the imagination, whose interests are practical and ethical, rather than speculative and metaphysical; whose concern is for order, decorum, propriety, moderation, rather than for meditation, prayer and spiritual songs; a backward looking race, whose reverence for the past accounts fundamentally for many characteristics of their present life.

China is a country that supports nearly one-third of the human race and on an area equal to half that of the United States; a

country with twenty-five hundred miles of coast-line and three immense river valleys, aggregating six thousand miles; a country that has witnessed the rise and fall of successive civilizations, the oldest of which antedates the pyramids and the sphinx; a country whose industry is world-renowned and symbolized by the gigantic wall, — twelve hundred miles long, twenty-five feet high, surmounted by a parapet on which six horsemen can ride abreast, built twenty centuries ago, yet its masonry still commanding the admiration of the world. Of the nature and variety of China's industry, let the achievements of Pekin and Nankin, Canton and Hong Kong tell. Nay, we have but to recall the fact that many of our English words for textile goods, such as silk, satin, nankeen, are of Chinese origin, to appreciate the significance of that industry. China's watchword has ever been "education" and though her educational system be open to criticism, it is well to remember that it has made for efficient government, tending to the total elimination of nepotism and the spoils system by

means of the civil service examinations required of applicants for the great majority of governmental positions. China supports, besides a host of minor institutions of learning, the University of Pekin, whose student body nearly outnumbers that of our two largest universities combined. And the fundamental aim of all her education has been not so much learning as behavior. Hence it happens that, in some respects, the Chinese as a whole are the most moral people in the world. They are taught from childhood to rely on reason rather than on physical force for the vindication of their rights. So high is the standard of business ethics that a paper contract is not necessary to bind a Chinese merchant. Etiquette is scrupulously observed in every walk of life, making a regularly organized police force unnecessary. Politeness, deference to elders, respect for authority, are conspicuous traits in all classes of society. These, which are among the acknowledged marks of the highest possible civilization, these, we find on a national scale in China.

It seemed to me necessary to make these preliminary statements because we of the Occident are altogether too apt to think of the Chinese as a barbarous, or semi-civilized people remarkable for the peculiar arrangement of their hair,[1] their yellow skin and slanting eyes, their opium, debauchery and dirt. We forget that China has her centres of culture and refinement as well as her slums, and that she is no more to be judged by the denizens of these degraded districts than is America by the population of the corresponding quarters in her great cities. Let it be remembered that if China has her "coolie" cooks and laundry folk and salmon-canners, she has also her magnificent men, of the stamp of Li-Hung-Chang, who has immortalized himself in the American heart by his touching memorial to General Grant; men of the stamp of Minister Wu, who fairly electrified an immense audience in Carnegie Hall by his candid discussion,

[1] The "queue" was forced on the Chinese by the Manchus in 1644; but in response to the modern spirit the Manchus themselves are doing away with the queue.

in a memorable address, of the relative merits of Confucianism and Christianity;[1] men like Prince Pung Kwang Yu, author of a most scholarly and exhaustive essay on Confucianism, read at the World's Parliament of Religions; men of the caliber of the regent, Prince Ch'un, who, on behalf of the infant emperor, on the second day of December, 1908, inaugurated a new era in Chinese history, issuing a decree in his Majesty's name, requiring all his subjects, on pain of extreme penalty, to assist in the gradual rehabilitation of the empire. And in this wonderful process of reorganization toward democracy we note the carefulness and caution, the far-sighted deliberation with which the work is being done, as contrasted with some of our precipitate methods, our frequent failure to "go slow round this curve" of social reform and the fond reliance of great masses of our people on one or another "panacea" for a complex situation that takes time. Out of its own national social

[1] Christianity was introduced into China by the Nestorians in 636 A.D.

thinking China is forming a new social ideal, and she no longer looks on her government as an unchangeable product of Nature, but rather as a progressive product of the national will, her development depending on the intelligent action of a free and educated people.

But towering far above these celebrities whose names I have mentioned, and above all other splendid types of Chinese manhood, stands the supreme inspiration of the eighty or more millions who to-day profess Confucianism, — Kung-fu-tze, the Master Kung, or, as we have learned to call him, in the Latinized form of his name, Confucius. In striking contrast to the little we know of Zoroaster's life stands the unparalleled fulness of detail concerning the life of Confucius. From our ultimate sources of information — the latest of the "Kings" and the four "Books" — we are enabled to compile biographical facts far outnumbering those of any other of the great moral leaders of the Orient. Typical of the details concerning his life that have been recorded I quote the following from the tenth



LAO–TZE.

book of the "Lun Yu": "He was nice in his diet, — not disliking to have his rice dressed fine, nor to have his minced meat cut small. He must have his meat cut properly, and to every kind its proper sauce; but he was not a great eater. It was only in drink that he laid down no limit to himself, but he did not allow himself to be confused by it. On occasion of a sudden clap of thunder, or a violent wind, he would change countenance. At the sight of a person in mourning, he would also change countenance, and if he happened to be in his carriage, he would bend forward with a respectful salutation. His general way in his carriage was not to turn his head round, nor talk hastily, nor point with his finger. He was charitable. When any of his friends died, if there were no relations who could be depended upon for the necessary offices, he would say, 'I will bury him.'" [1]

Confucius was born in the year 551 B.C. in the principality of Lu in eastern China and was thus a contemporary of Gotama. He was the

[1] Chinese Classics, ed. Legge, Vol. I, p. 89.

son of Shu-Liang-Ho, an old but robust ex-officer of the Chinese army who had contracted a childless marriage and to whom a concubine had borne a daughter.[1] When about to marry again he sought the hand of one of the three daughters of the Yen family. The father of these young ladies summoned them and stated Shu's desire, adding that though old he was yet vigorous, healthy, of noble birth, and holding a high position in the government. "Which of you shall I offer him?" he asked. The two oldest remained silent, but the third said, "Father, it is for you to command and for us to obey." To which he replied, "Very well, then, you will do." And so this maiden of nineteen became the wife of the septuagenarian and their son was Confucius. That same filial piety which the youngest of Yen's daughters exhibited toward her father, Confucius

[1] Concubinage was tolerated out of respect for family perpetuation. To have a son to perpetuate his name and to perform the funeral offices at his death, this was the chief desideratum of every Chinese father. To be without male offspring justified concubinage, but it was regulated according to position, the emperor being allowed nine concubines, the ordinary citizen but one.

manifested toward his mother, for whom he seems to have had an affection exceeding that for his own son and daughter. As a child Confucius showed a pronounced proclivity for serious study, for playing at festivals, at the postures of ceremony and the arrangement of sacrificial vessels, thus bearing out the familiar Wordsworthian epigram, "The child is father to the man." At fifteen years of age he had already acquired an enviable reputation for his intellectual attainments. At nineteen he married and in his twentieth year he was appointed "Keeper of the Provincial stores." The following year he was promoted to the Agricultural Department of the government and made "Superintendent of farms and lands." How deeply conscious he was of the dignity of his office and the duty of faithfully fulfilling its requirements is attested by many a passage in the sacred books of Confucianism, showing him to have been a man of incorruptible honor and devoutly consecrated to his ideals. Holding somewhat unpopular views on questions of political ethics he fearlessly

uttered them, censuring officials and parties regardless of results to himself. With a splendid courage he acted as a public censor and paid the price of his office for his heroism. Forced to resign his position, he devoted himself to travel, and for thirty years went from city to city, proclaiming those principles of political and moral reform which later were embodied in the "Four Books." When he had reached his fiftieth year a crisis occurred in the affairs of Lu and he was recalled, receiving an appointment as "magistrate" of the province. This afforded him opportunity to test the practical worth of some of his teachings and the effect, we are told, bordered on the miraculous. Under his administration, the poor were properly cared for; helpless, elderly people were treated with sympathy and wisdom; crime diminished; war was discouraged and even the "Magna Charta" was anticipated, for Confucius maintained that prisoners had a right to trial by jury. So prosperous and peaceful was the principality of Lu under the Confucian régime that the princes of the

neighboring provinces became jealous and contrived to undermine the success of their rival. Knowing the King's weakness for spectacular entertainment, they hired eighty captivating dancing girls, bidding them present his majesty with twenty span of gorgeously caparisoned horses and forthwith entertain him with dance and song. So infatuated was the King of Lu with this entertainment that for three successive days he gave himself over to pleasure, ignoring all the duties of his office and giving official audience to no one. This behavior so disgusted Confucius that he resigned as magistrate, declining to serve under such a chief executive of state. Thus the ingenious scheme of the jealous princes had the desired effect. Having surrendered his office Confucius resolved to devote the remainder of his life to two ends: first, the gathering about him of a band of disciples to be trained in the principles of personal and social reform, and second, the editing of the sacred books of the Chinese religion. Both these aims he fulfilled and in the seventy-third year of his

age he died, leaving a legacy of governmental principles, moral precepts and a personal example that have enriched and ennobled countless lives within and without the confines of China. I have it on the authority of Minister Wu that the influence of Confucius is on the increase, that his name is held in highest veneration throughout the Chinese empire, not by Confucianists alone, but also by Taoists, Buddhists and representatives of the other religions, all of them protected by the government. It is said that the spirit of Confucius, like an atmosphere, pervades the thought and life of the four hundred million inhabitants of China. We may trace his influence in three distinct directions. It appears first, in his capacity as editor of the five "Kings" or "Canons," which constitute the canonical scriptures of Confucianism. The word "King" is of textile origin and signifies the warp-threads across which the woof are thrown in weaving the web. The five Kings are:—

1. *I-King*, "Canon of Changes," the most ancient of the five, an occult interpretation of

Nature and life by means of "trigrams" in sixty-four combinations to each of which a symbolical meaning is attached.

2. *Shu-King*, "Canon of History," an historico-ethical work extolling the virtues of ancient model kings as contrasted with certain despots. The narrative dates back to 3000 B.C. but the early portions are so fraught with legendary embellishment as to lose all historical credibility.

3. *Shi-King*, "Canon of Odes," a collection of three hundred and five odes, introducing us to the most ancient culture of China, many of these compositions having been sung by poets centuries before they were committed to writing, as the record itself testified.

4. *Li-Ki-King*, "Canon of Rites," consisting of rules for the ceremonial to be observed by gentlemen in all the various relations of private life, a book that takes us into the very heart of Chinese society as it already was, centuries before Confucius. This book has its analogue in the "Chou-li" written at a much later day and dealing with the cere-

monial for public life, as the "Li-Ki" with that for private life. "As an educator of the nation," says Professor Hirth, "the 'Chou-li' is unparalleled in the literature of the world."

5. *Ch'un-Ts'iu*, "Spring and Autumn," annals (700–550 B.C.) of the province of Lu, and mainly the work of Confucius himself. The vicissitudes through which these "Kings" passed have been graphically described by a member of the "Han" dynasty, written about the time that Jesus was born. He relates how, after the death of Confucius, disputes arose as to the authenticity of the text, owing to the appearance of various editions; how incendiarism, actuated by the desire to keep the people in ignorance, destroyed the sacred literature of the nation; how, in the second century before our era, a successful attempt at remedying the unspeakable loss was made by an edict commanding all loyal Chinese to assist in the work of restoration, a commission having been appointed to superintend the work of collecting and editing all that could be recovered. And it is from the first century prior

to our era that the Chinese "Classics," as we now have them, date.

Great as was the influence of Confucius in his capacity as editor, it was still more marked in his capacity as teacher. This is made manifest in the "Four Books," the uncanonical scriptures of Confucianism. They may be regarded as the text-book of Confucianism, for though written after his death by disciples and devotees, they present the Master's thought throughout. They are: —

1. *Lun-Yu*, "Discourses," or "Analects," presenting in twenty books the essential teaching of Confucius on the "national" virtue, filial piety as the foundation of family life and of that larger family life represented by the state with its government, to which obedience is required even as of children to their parents.

2. *Ta-Hio*, "The Great Learning," a treatise on self-culture, grounded on the conception of knowledge as a means of promoting social reform.

3. *Chung-Yung*, "Doctrine of the Mean,"

the middle path between extremes, which the philosopher recommends.

4. *Mong-Tzi*, "Mencius, the Philosopher," who lived from 372 to 289 B.C. and was the stoutest champion of Confucian doctrines in his day. This book bears much resemblance to the "Lun-Yu" though more particularly concerned with "equilibrium" and "harmony" in government. For fuller information on these "Four Books" let me refer you to James Legge's noble edition of them, in both Chinese and English, under the title "Chinese Classics."

But it was in his capacity as an exemplar that the influence of Confucius was most conspicuous and counted for most in the lives of his contemporaries. Like the philosopher and emperor, Marcus Aurelius, who tried to hold up the falling Roman empire by the power of personal example, himself illustrating in all humility self-control, self-reverence and self-realization, so Confucius cherishing a like belief in the efficacy of example, as the most powerful reforming agent, sought so to radiate a beneficent influence. He rightly held that

f all reforming agencies there is none equal
o the contagion of personality. Inspiration
lways counts for more than instruction when
he problem is one of transfiguring common-
lace lives. The best thing any teacher can
o, better than anything he can teach is to
ommunicate moral earnestness and conse-
ration. And were we to select from among his
haracteristics the one Confucius esteemed
ost highly of all, it would undoubtedly be
is calm, persistent reliance on the power of
xample as superior to every other agency ca-
able of refining and elevating human life.

To understand the rise of Confucius as a great moral leader, the cause and character of his leadership, we must go back in Chinese history to the reign of the famous "Chou" dynasty which lasted from 1124 to 249 B.C. During this period political, social and moral conditions obtained that provoked negative protest and demanded positive reforms. Early in the eighth century before our era there were signs of a decline of power in the central government. Restless, self-seeking territorial lords

plotted the invasion and usurpation of sovereign authority. They soon made of China a battle-ground for the contending hosts of political ambition and greed. For China was divided, much as was Germany, into small states, each of which had to subordinate its feudatory government to imperial authority. But precisely as the historical map of Germany shows a shifting of territorial boundary lines during the Thirty Years' War and long after, so during the Chou dynasty, a similar but much aggravated situation was developed, reaching its most anarchic and demoralized condition about the middle of the sixth century. Nor was the general disorder confined to the political and social life of the people; it extended to their intellectual life. For, into the arena of contending powers swarmed philosophers of various schools with their conflicting theories of the universe and of life, each seeking the patronage and support of one or another of the territorial lords. Then it was that Confucius appeared as an independent teacher and reformer, setting forth the principles on which a

strong, stable, peaceful, ethical, imperial government must be reared, the conditions on which the right ordering of states depends and the moral rules that serve so to regulate individual life as to make it conducive to personal and national welfare.

Examining the ancient religious records which he subsequently edited, he observed that under Yao and Shun, twenty centuries before his day, the nation was peaceful, prosperous, happy. Semi-mythical paragons of perfection as these kings were, Confucius believed that their reign was the golden age of Chinese history and their exemplary lives the root cause of it. Consequently, to imitate their example and reproduce their doctrines of political and social life was to Confucius the true solution of the problems which conditions under the Chou dynasty had raised. Thus, you observe, he disclaimed originality. He held that this was a power never to be claimed by any one under any circumstances, since Yao and Shun were the real and ultimate sources to which all truth and virtue must be traced.

In them he saw the originators of what he merely passed on to later generations. His mission he felt was that of a humble transmitter of what he had found in the ancient scriptures of his people. "His brain was but a phonograph," as Professor Hirth has said, recording the wisdom of the first sages for the benefit of his contemporaries and posterity. And just as this traditionalism made Confucius, so in turn did Confucius make China. No sooner had he incorporated in himself the race to which he belonged than it felt the reaction of his mighty personality, eighty million souls, or more, turning to him as he had turned to Yao and Shun. As indicative alike of his intellectual humility and his sense of gratitude to these illustrious teachers of antiquity I select the following quotations from the "Four Books": —

"In the way of the superior man there are four things, to not one of which have I as yet attained. — To serve my father, as I would require my son to serve me: to this I have not attained; to serve my prince, as I would re-

quire my minister to serve me: to this I have not attained; to serve my elder brother, as I would require my younger brother to serve me: to this I have not attained; to set the example in behaving to a friend, as I would require him to behave to me: to this I have not attained."

"The Master said: The sage and the man of perfect virtue; — how dare I rank myself with them? It may simply be said of me, that I strive to become such without satiety, and teach others without weariness."

"The Master said: A transmitter and not a maker, believing in and loving the ancients, I venture to compare myself with our old P'âng."[1]

In the preceding lecture we asked, what is the chief end of man? We compared the answer given in the Catechism, with what Gotama and Zoroaster would have said. But the answer Confucius would have given has nothing in common with any of these. "To glorify God and enjoy him forever" would have been an end altogether too remote, metaphysical and

[1] Legge, Chinese Classics, Vol. I, pp. 394, 206, 427, 195.

mystical to satisfy him. To stop the process of reincarnation, whether by the Hindu or by the Buddhistic method, was an end wholly foreign to the order of ideas on which Confucius had been brought up. Zoroaster's answer, — to coöperate with Ahura-Mazda the primeval good principle in the struggle for victory over Angro-Mainyus, the source and sustainer of all evil — this, too, was an end altogether alien to the reflections of Confucius. Having for his prime and ever present concern the perfecting of the relations that exist between man and man, his answer would have been expressed in terms of that all-absorbing problem. To him the chief end of man was to become a desirable member of society and the main function of Confucius as a great moral leader lay in pointing the way to the attainment of this end. He directed attention to the word "reciprocity" as that "on which the whole of life may proceed," adding, "what you do not wish done to yourself do not unto others." He advocated for each individual, whatever his calling or his position in society, the practice of "the five

cardinal virtues": justice, temperance, generosity, humility, propriety (a sense of the fitness of things). He divided the possible relations of man into five groups, attaching to each specific duties and defined "the superior man" as one who recognized these relations and fulfilled the duties of such of the five as came into the realm of his experience. Sovereign and subject, husband and wife, parent and child, older and younger brothers and sisters, friend and friend. As typing the duties identified with each of these five relations he bade sovereigns be benevolent and subjects loyal, husbands devoted and wives affectionate, parents wise and children obedient, older brothers and sisters considerate of younger and the younger deferential toward the older, friend faithful to friend.

Given the fulfilment of these various duties, scrupulous observance of all the rules which Confucius prepared for the different departments of life, and there would ensue of necessity, he believed, that regulation of the individual, the family and the state which guaran-

tees to the whole nation "the three greatest blessings, — material prosperity, learning and virtue." Yea, there would be seen again in society, what glorified the kingdoms of Yao and Shun, — a reproduction in human life of the serene, harmonious order visible in the solar system and in the regular operations of Nature. Only through these, Confucius held, does "Heaven" speak. That order in Nature provides man with a pattern of moral conduct. Man, he believed, has no higher lesson to learn than that taught him by Nature, viz. to reproduce in his own personal life and in society an order as calm and unbroken and harmonious as is hers. Just here let me quote the following passages from the "Analects" and the "Great Learning" in confirmation of what has been said touching the chief end of man: —

"Ever think of your ancestors, cultivate virtue, strive to accord your dispositions to Nature; so shall you be seeking great happiness.

"Does Heaven speak? The four seasons pursue their courses and all things are con-

tinually being produced in order. Equilibrium is the root from which harmony springs. Harmony is the universal path which all creatures should pursue. Let the states of harmony and equilibrium exist in perfection and a happy order will prevail and all things flourish.

"The ancients who wished to illustrate virtue throughout the kingdom, first ordered well their own States. Wishing to order well their States, they regulated their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first cultivated their persons. Wishing to cultivate their persons, they first rectified their hearts. Wishing to rectify their hearts, they first sought to be sincere in their thoughts. Wishing to be sincere in their thoughts, they first extended to the utmost their knowledge. Such extension of knowledge lay in the investigation of things. Things being investigated, knowledge became complete. Their knowledge being complete, their thoughts were sincere. Their thoughts being sincere, their hearts were then rectified. Their hearts being rectified, their persons were cultivated.

Their persons being cultivated, their families were regulated. Their families being regulated, their States were rightly governed. Their States being rightly governed, the whole kingdom was made tranquil and happy." [1]

Concerning belief in God, Confucius was exceedingly reserved. He "preferred not to speak," and his reserve was due, in part, to the influence of the ancient Chinese religion which, like the government, was patriarchal, only the Emperor worshipping "Heaven," while the common people worshipped only their ancestors. Partly, also, this reserve was due to an innate agnostic tendency of Confucius' own mind. We read that "among the subjects on which the Master did not speak were spiritual beings and miraculous things." Unlike Gotama, who was an atheist in the sense that he "left vacant the place above the finite gods," — denying the existence of a supreme permanent Reality (Brahma), believing all things and beings to exist only in a state of flux, — Confucius recognized a Power higher

[1] Legge, Chinese Classics, p. 357.



CONFUCIUS.

than man, related to man. But knowing nothing of that Power he preferred to be silent on the subject. Plenty of passages there are in his own "Ch'un-ts'iu-King" and in the "Four Books" to prove him a deeply religious man, conscious of dependence on an inscrutable Power. But being inscrutable, Confucius invariably used the cosmic term "Tien" (Heaven) in preference to the anthropomorphic term "Shang-ti" (Highest Lord). It is related that when imprisoned in the city of Ku'ang with a group of disciples and it seemed to them that release would be indefinitely postponed, Confucius reminded them that "Heaven protects the culture" which he and they represent. "What harm can come to those protected by Heaven?" On another occasion, when threatened with assassination and his disciples urged him to flee, the Master said, "Heaven has endowed me with virtues, what have I to fear from oppressors?" On another occasion he said, "Alas! there is no one that knows me." Tsze-Kung said, "What do you mean by thus saying that no one knows

you?" He replied, "I do not murmur against Heaven. I do not grumble against men. My studies lie low, and my penetration rises high. But there is Heaven, — THAT knows me!" [1]

It is worthy of note that the attitude of Confucius toward theism saved millions of Chinese from the degrading superstitions and magic that mark Taoism and Chinese Buddhism.[2]

In conformity with his conception of "Heaven" Confucius held that petitional prayer is inefficacious and therefore not to be practised. "My prayers," he said, "were offered up long ago," meaning that he considered prayers to consist in living a good life and obeying the dictates of conscience. "He who sins against Heaven has no place to pray," he continues, meaning that even spirits have no power to bestow blessings on those who have sinned against the decrees of Heaven. The use of flowers and the offering of food to "spirits"

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 98–99.

[2] Buddhism was introduced into China about 65 A.D. and since then has undergone almost total transformation there.

that were thus worshipped, Confucius regarded as desirable only for "spiritual purification," tending to make one more susceptible to influences from the realm of spirits. For Confucius accepted the ancient Chinese belief in a hierarchy of Nature-spirits corresponding to the political organization of the country. Just as the various officials of the empire stand under the emperor, so under the heaven-spirit, highest lord, "Shang-ti," there exist the spirits of the sun, the moon, the stars, the rivers, the forests, etc., together with the ancestral spirits of families, ranked according to the social status of the people. There being such a hierarchy of spirits, it follows that all persons cannot be permitted to worship these spirits indiscriminately. Only the emperor can worship Heaven. Only governors of provinces can worship the spirits of mountains and rivers. Only magistrates and officials below the governor can worship the minor orders of spirits. The common people can worship only the spirits of their ancestors and are required to do so. Hence in every Confucian home there

is a "hall of the ancestors" where tablets are placed bearing the names of the ancestors, father and mother conducting the ceremony. This consists of praises to the spirits of the ancestors and the offering of flowers, followed by a family meal to which the spirits are invited and at which they are represented by one of the boys of the family, dressed in his dead grandfather's clothes, to symbolize the presence of the ancestral spirits. The emperor, no less than the common people, is required to worship the spirits of his ancestors and the supreme semi-annual festival is that in honor of the royal ancestors, conducted by the emperor himself, assisted by the chief dignitaries of the realm. At the common meal one of the imperial grandsons, duly robed in an ancestral royal gown, represents the spirits of ancestral royalty.

To this "spring and autumn festival" must be added the annual ceremony in commemoration of Confucius, celebrated in the red-walled temple of Confucius at Pekin and conducted by the emperor. Before the tablet of the Master he

utters the following invocation: "Great art thou, O perfect Sage. Thy virtue is full, thy doctrine complete. Among mortal men there has not been thy equal. All Kings honor thee. Thou art our pattern. Reverently have the sacrificial vessels been set out. Full of awe we sound our drums and bells." Two characteristics of these ceremonies are to be particularly noted. First, there is nothing propitiative or intercessory in them, as compared with Christian prayers and offerings; they are purely commemorative, springing from a grateful recognition of indebtedness to the past. Second, they are thoroughly typical of the practical, ethical, non-theological nature of Confucianism; a state-religion of the most pronounced and thoroughgoing type, employing civic officials where other religions hire priests and acknowledging in these officials no supernatural power or meditorial functions, but solely that of conducting the commemorative exercises; a religion without theology, church or priesthood; a religion so identified with the national government as on the one

hand to have given it its unrivalled, unsurpassed persistence through five thousand years, and on the other hand to have denied it that sense of infinite relations and infinite possibilities without which no religion can ever permanently satisfy. Just as Venice paid for the stability of her oligarchy the terrible price of unproductiveness in original literature, art, philosophy and poetry of the first rank, so China paid the price of spiritual sterility for her unification of religion and the political state.

With reference to belief in a future life Confucius again took an agnostic position, one altogether consistent with his attitude to theism and the intense practicality of his dominant ethical interests, concerned, as they were, solely with terrestrial reform. Like Horace Greeley, whom Minister Wu quoted in his Carnegie Hall address, Confucius felt that "they who discharge the duties of this life will find they have no time to peer into life beyond the grave; better, therefore, attend to each life in its proper order." All speculation on the hereafter was to him profitless and

futile. He behaved toward questions on man's state after death very much as did Gotama and Jesus, pointing to the path of righteousness here and now, reminding them that this is man's first concern and that in consecrated devotion thereto he can safely trust the future to be generous and just. A characteristic passage from his sayings is the following: "Chi-Lu asked about serving the spirits of the dead, and the Master said, 'While you are not able to serve men, how can you serve their spirits?' The disciple added, 'I venture to ask about death,' and he was answered, 'While you do not know life, how can you know about death?'" Still more striking is a conversation with another disciple, recorded in the "Narratives of the School." "Tsze-Kung asked him, saying, 'Do the dead have knowledge (of our services, that is), or are they without knowledge?' The Master replied, 'If I were to say that the dead have such knowledge, I am afraid that filial sons and dutiful grandsons would injure their substance in paying the last offices to the departed;

and if I were to say that the dead have not such knowledge, I am afraid lest unfilial sons should leave their parents unburied. You need not wish, Tsze, to know whether the dead have knowledge or not. There is no present urgency about the point. Hereafter you will know it for yourself.' " [1]

But being a practical people, it is not unusual to find Confucianists, when confronted with business or domestic misfortune, or with death, employing Taoist or Buddhist priests to bring their magical auguries to bear on the crisis, or to chant their requiems for the departed, as the case may be. In other words, not being certain of what comes after death, and their own religion providing no ceremonial related to the soul's future welfare, they find it practicable and desirable to resort to religions that make a specialty of securing eternal bliss in the world to come. Commendable as such eclecticism may be, it none the less betrays a fatal defect in the Master's religion and the probability of a neo-Confucianism rising in

[1] *Op. cit.*, pp. 95, 99.

China, equal to meeting a spiritual need which no one of the three ruling religions of China supplies to the satisfaction of the best elements of the nation.

If Gotama's system may be described as a religion of the heart, because of his emphasis on self-renouncing love; if the system of Zoroaster may be designated a religion of the hand, because of the stress laid upon purifying, saving work; then that of Confucius may be called a religion of the head, because intellectual mastery of his principles and rules of morality was the surest guarantee of an ideal social order. He firmly believed that if people would but reverently memorize and master these precepts, the intellectual task would so react on the will as to produce the moral life. People, he used to say, are just like water which takes exactly the shape of the dish into which it is poured. Such a dish he saw in his system of rules and if only the people could be, as it were, poured into the dish, the desired moral result would ensue. But alas, between knowing what is right and doing it, there lies

love of the right and the will to do it. And until the affections and will are reckoned with and duly trained, the Confucian plan must remain but partially complete. So far did he go in his reliance on rules as to advocate the assuming of certain physical postures expressive of moral qualities, — such as humility, reverence, obedience, — believing that the very soul of the individual would become informed with these graces of character of which the postures were the external signs. Whatever degree of value is to be attached to such intellectual and physical self-discipline as Confucius enjoined, it will be conceded that this faith of his in the efficacy of rules and attitudes to achieve the desired moral end, this method of working from the circumference to the centre, coupled with the influence of ancestor-worship, explains in large measure that age-long arrested development of China to which she has recently awakened and from which she is steadily freeing herself.

In bold and striking contrast to Confucius stood his older contemporary, the philosopher

and state historian, Lao-Tze. He was fifty years old when Confucius was born. The story is told that when the latter visited the state capitol to consult the archives of which Lao-Tze was the custodian, the venerable sage took occasion to inform him that his ideas were erroneous and his reform-method futile, adding that it would be well to discard his artificial dignity and ceremonial manner, because when a man has real modesty and humility he does not seek to give them external expression. In this rebuff Lao-Tze struck the real defect, the vulnerable spot in the Confucian system. On its positive side, the thought of Lao-Tze was that man should aim to possess that inward deep morality of the spirit which makes him indifferent to rules and spontaneously intuitively guides him to what is right. Just as Jesus, in his discussion with the tricky lawyer, took the ground that he who has the spirit of love to God and love to man in his heart has that out of which all good actions will spontaneously flow, so Lao-Tze held that there is in every man the "Tao," that divine

spirit which has its counterpart in the external world as the basis of Nature's order and harmony, and in devotion to which "the incomplete achieves completion, and the ideal of perfection, realization." Thus there exists "the eternal Tao," bodiless, omnipresent, prior even to God, as conditioning the total universe; the "ur-grund" of all that is. Being omnipresent, it is immanent in man as his reasoning, virtue-acting power, operating to will and to do the transcendent divine will of the Tao. Let man yield himself to its holy prompting and "act non-assertion"; let him never interfere with Nature's way or seek to alter the nature of things, but rather practise self-surrender to the Tao, and he will find that "in quietness and confidence shall be his strength."

Like Confucius, Lao-Tze believed that man's chief end is to reproduce in all the personal and social relations of life the moral prototype furnished by Nature's order and harmony, but he differed from Confucius as to the means whereby this end should be reached. Not by

setting up a system of rules and regulations and adjusting souls to them, but rather by developing inner poise, purity, passivity, *i.e.* self-subordination to the promptings of "Tao," which makes the soul superior to rules, did Lao-Tze propose to achieve the desired end. Such was the ethical mysticism of the venerable philosopher, as I gather it from the one only book he wrote, — the "Tao-te-King," or, "Classic of Reason and Virtue."

Lao-Tze was an ascetic, a recluse; he went into voluntary exile, disgusted with the political and social disorder of his time. Confucius was a man of the world, yet without worldliness, through personal example influencing his fellow-men for good.

Lao-Tze was an unshorn, tattered, half-starved hermit; the occupant of a hollow rock or cave in the wilderness. Confucius was a sleek, well-fed, comfortable philosopher and statesman; enjoying the favor of princes and kings.

Lao-Tze sought to reform each human soul at the roots of his being, to purify the heart,

the inner springs of conduct, believing that all external relations would right themselves as a result. Confucius began at the other end, with etiquette, propriety, good manners, moral rules, believing that the heart would thereby be reformed. Lao-Tze determined man's life from within; Confucius, from without. The former was subjective, the latter objective in attitude and method. The one operated from the centre to the circumference, the other from the circumference to the centre. Lao-Tze was an anarchist in the philosophical sense, opposed to governing and in favor of spontaneity and independence in thought and conduct. Confucius was a monarchist, wishing to have government penetrate to the very heart of the individual, the family and the state.

Lao-Tze cared for wisdom, not scholarship. Confucius cared for scholarship and hoped to get wisdom through learning.

Lao-Tze's system called for much patient and hard thinking, for analysis of the condensed ethical truths of the "Tao-te-King,"

offered, as they were, without commentary or explanation and interspersed with metaphysical argument. The code of Confucius called for no such mental and physical strain. It was concrete, intelligible, practical; free from speculative elements, serviceable as a text-book of instruction for public schools and actually was made the basis of all civil service examinations, the sole gateway to office. No wonder, then, that in view of these differences, Confucius as a moral leader eclipsed Lao-Tze, though much of the latter's message is of transcendent worth and singularly suited to our own age with its passion for external results that are tangible, its devotion to ameliorating social and economic conditions as contrasted with the more radical devotion to that which is inpalpable and imperishable, the infinite and eternal worth in man. Yet, after all, the supreme reliance of Confucius, as we have seen, was not on rules alone, nor on rules plus biographies, but on personal beneficent example. This he held superior to every other known reformatory agent. Such having been his con-

viction, it should be noted further that the lifting power of his example was due, not so much to his exalted character and great learning, as to his striving for an ideal of virtue and of scholarship which he felt he had not yet attained. Others, seeing that striving, were moved to a like endeavor. So is it ever with the truly great teacher. Not his intellectual or moral attainments, but his spiritual passion to possess more of infinite truth and right, this it is that determines his lifting power over other lives. So was it with Confucius. His greatest work of art was not his edition of the "Kings" nor the composition of the "Spring and Autumn Annals"; it was the life in which he practised the precepts taught in the books.

V

THE PROPHETS OF ISRAEL AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF MAN

V

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IN the second lecture of this course we saw the part played by the "Rishis" in India, forty centuries ago; those poet-priests who in exquisitely modulated verse interpreted the world in terms of spirit, seeing in Nature the manifestation of countless intelligent powers or spirits. Still to-day do those "Vedic" bards make their appeal. Despite their polytheism, long since outgrown, they call us away from the crude materialism which in its crass conceit imagines it has dispelled the mystery from matter and explained creation in terms of "Kraft und Stoff."

And when the successors of those poet-priests departed from the simplicity and purity of the ancient Vedic faith, becoming engrossed in ceremonialism and priestcraft, in anti-democratic caste exclusiveness and debilitat-

ing asceticism, then it was that Gotama, the Buddha, appeared. He called a halt at this religious externalism and inaugurated a mighty ethical reaction, mapping out a systematic course in self-discipline, many of the features of which are as useful for us to-day as they were for the Indians of fifteen centuries ago.

In the third lecture we saw how Zoroaster inspired the oppressed peasants of Bactria to drain the marshes, irrigate the dry lands, destroy noxious insects, maintain personal purity in thought, word and deed, because, said he, through such physical and moral work the power of the arch demon, Ahriman, the source of all evil, will be destroyed and the victory of the supreme and everlasting good God Ormuzd, be guaranteed. Here, too, we found a gospel not without its elements of practical value for our own developing civilization.

The fourth lecture was devoted to Confucius, statesman, moralist, exemplar, exponent of the gospel that man's supreme purpose should be to reproduce in all the various relations of public

and private life the beautiful, calm, unbroken order of Nature.

We come now to a group of great moral leaders identified, not with the Aryan, or the Turanian, but with the Semitic branch of the human family; the prophets of Israel. They are the noblest ancient representatives of a people whose story extends over thirty-five centuries and is, without exception, the most remarkable in the history of the nations; a people, homeless, suspected, persecuted; wanderers over the face of the earth, seeking a permanent home and finding none; a people subjected throughout the Christian centuries to gross indignities from the people of Jesus and Paul, both of whom were Jews; a people victimized by prejudice so deep and inhuman that even little children of refined Jewish parents have come home from school crying because of the abuse heaped on them by the children of parents whose finest religious inheritances are from Moses and his successors; a people whose religious patriotism has been so intensified by persecution that even the most

liberal among them insist on remaining Jews so long as Christians make it a reproach to be a Jew; a people who founded the first universities of continental Europe and who, in an age of superstition, when faith was blind and ignorance a passport to Paradise, fostered education, advanced the arts and sciences and who count among the contributors to our civilization, Astruc and Ibn Ezra, Maimonides and Moses Mendelssohn, Spinoza, Heine, Auerbach and the Montefiores; a people numbering to-day eleven millions in all; and of the one million or more, here in Greater New York, it must be said that, as a class, they are the most self-respecting, self-reliant, self-supporting, law-abiding portion of our mixed population.

Just whence the ancestors of this people came is still one of the vexed problems of ethnology. Yet we do know that in historical times they occupied the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, and that after a brief sojourn on the borders of Egypt they marched northward to Canaan where they settled down to agricul-

tural life and organized that religion which, like those of India, Persia and China, underwent development; its evolution ranging from the crude polytheism and uncivilized morality of patriarchal times to the pure monotheism and ethics of the post-exilian prophets.

First among the great Hebrew leaders whose names have come down to us is Abraham. In the patriarchal age he overshadows all other personalities. Unfortunately the facts of his life and work are so enmeshed in legendary material as to forbid our forming any trustworthy opinions concerning his achievements. Indeed, there are those who deny the historicity of Abraham altogether, believing the name to be that of a tribe rather than of an individual. He is represented in the Old Testament as the first Jew to leave the ancestral home, to go from "Ur of the Chaldees" westward and lay the foundations of a new nation. He is also represented as making a covenant or contract with "Yahweh" according to which He will be their God and further their interests as His chosen people, provided they acknowledge

him as their God and fulfil his commandments.

But the most commanding figure among all the early Palestinian teachers and leaders is Moses, the father of Hebrew liberty and legislation. It would carry us too far afield were we to review the story of his life and work, engaging and instructive though it is. After his death, the separate tribes which had formed a loose confederation found that only in solid union is there strength. Accordingly, about the year 1060 B.C. a Hebrew monarchy was organized with Saul as the first king. For nearly a century prosperity and peace were so in the ascendant that later generations looked back upon this period as the golden age of Hebrew history. But when Solomon's son, Rehoboam, refused to reduce the taxes that had been levied for the building of the temple and when twice in succession the candidate for the throne was chosen from among the southern tribes, the northern group rebelled. The result was a division of the United Kingdom into "Israel" and "Judah," a northern and

a southern kingdom, the former dating from 960 to 722 B.C. and the latter outliving the northern kingdom by a century and a half, to 585 B.C.

Both kingdoms, during the first hundred years of their existence, developed a strong and many-sided civilization, yet not without its dark and dangerous features. For the record tells us that along with developing prosperity there was a slackening of devotion to Yahweh and his commandments, that with the increase of culture came the curse of luxury, that acquaintance with the licentious practices of the Canaanitish religion corrupted public and private morals, that when all the people aided in the tilling of the soil, there was no poverty to be abolished, whereas the growth of the commercial spirit and the tendency of land to fall into the hands of a few were productive of disastrous consequences. Creditors snatched children from their parents to extort the money they could not otherwise obtain (2 Kings iv. 1). Hunger compelled some who were in poverty to put themselves voluntarily under bondage for bread (1 Sam.

ii. 5). The law tried to ameliorate the lot of such slaves by limiting their servitude to six years, but it was not always observed (Jer. xxxiv). David and some of his successors seized lands from their subjects and gave the property to favorite nobles (1 Sam. viii. 14). The story of Naboth (1 Kings xxi) illustrates one of the many acts of injustice of those days and the rapaciousness of the rich who "added field to field," dispossessing the small landholders and confiscating the common lands. The record tells of merchants reclining on ivory couches eating young calves and drinking costly wines from golden bowls to the music of the timbrel and the viol, revelling in luxuries while they squeezed high prices from their customers and "sold the poor into slavery for their debt on a pair of shoes" (Amos ii. 6; vi. 6). Nay more, the record tells also of a war-cloud, at first no bigger than a man's hand, spreading westward from Assyria till it hung over this brilliant, prosperous, luxurious, cultured Hebrew civilization of the eighth century.

Then it was that there appeared in both the northern and the southern kingdom a succession of great moral leaders known as prophets. They were not soothsayers, diviners, seers, clairvoyants, trance speakers. Rather were they the successors of this class in Israel. Not fore-tellers but forth-tellers they were, predicting, not on the basis of any occult practices, but solely on the basis of study of the economic, political, social, moral and religious conditions of their time. Statesmen they were, of the highest type, recalling the sacred contract that had been made between Israel and Yahweh, the terms of which had been grossly violated by the people for whose benefit the covenant had been made. They had allowed themselves to think that just because such a covenant *had* been made Yahweh was inseparably bound up with the national welfare, forgetting all the while that their God is a righteous God, "the Holy One," and that, as such, he demands righteousness as the *sine quâ non* of Divine protection and bounty. Hence the immediate function of the prophets was to

draw attention to this neglected aspect of the covenant and to interpret the varying vicissitudes of the nation in the light of it. When prosperity came, it meant a fulfilment of Yahweh's promise; when adversity crossed their path, it was the sign of failure on the part of the chosen people to fulfil their part of the contract, a chastising that meant also a preparation for future blessings. And the greater the misfortunes of the nation, the more fixed and intense became the faith of the prophets that Yahweh would not forsake his people, but through the discipline of suffering and sorrow bring them back to himself and his commandments and so fit them for a glorious future. In opposition to the traditional practice of fleeing to the altar and doubling the sacrifices in time of danger or disaster, the prophets preached the utter futility and folly of such externalism. They held steadfastly to their conviction that at such times the sole source of safety lies in the practice of ethical religion, and warned the people again and again that the precursors of national death are injustice,

greed, pride and wantonness. These prophets did not wait to be hired to preach and they could not be bought to keep still. Again and again did they embarrass kings, and constantly were their relations with the masses strained. Instead of chiming in with the jingoism of their day, they cried, "Wash you, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, saith the Lord." No other nation ever produced an order of prophets. The finest flower of Athenian thought was devoted to philosophy, literature and art. The genius of ancient Rome spent itself in the development of law. But the noblest representatives of Israel were consecrated to the interests of an ethical religion.

Just how far Elijah and Elisha represented the typical Hebrew prophet it is difficult to say because the story of their work has come down to us in an idealized form, largely overlaid with legendary lore. Deeply conscious as they were of the sinfulness of idolatry, and successful as they were in uprooting and annihilating the Tyrian Baal-worship, by means

of the overthrow of the Omri dynasty, of which Ahab was the head, nevertheless they seem to have had no consciousness of national moral guilt or of its relation to national misfortune. Having condemned and extirpated idolatry, they seem to have thought that they had no further mission to fulfil. At least they devote themselves only to optimistic preaching of Yahweh's favor and power, advising continuous trust in His goodness and might. The distinctive characteristic of the typical prophet, viz. his belief that national misfortune is always superinduced by national unrighteousness, that a nation morally reprehensible is unworthy to be blessed, this, it would seem, was wanting in the message of the prophets prior to Amos, *i.e.* from Samuel to Micajah. True, Elijah announced "the judgment of Yahweh" and Micajah gave a magnificent exhibition of a prophet declining to promise Yahweh's favor except to those who did what was right. But these examples at best are only the exceptions that prove the rule. When, however, the nation came

into closer relations with her foreign neighbors, notably Assyria and Egypt, when danger threatened from these quarters, when increasing prosperity brought demoralizing luxury in its train, when the future of the nation began to grow dark and doubtful, seeing that the all-powerful Yahweh allowed the enemies of Israel to harass her, then it was that the supreme type of the prophetic order appeared. Prophets, they were, who interpreted Hebrew history in terms of moral conduct, who explained the nation's tribulation as due to violation of the moral commandments of "the righteous One," who recognized Yahweh, not only as "the Mighty One," but also as "the Holy One," and therefore requiring that His people be holy if they would prosper.

First, in chronological order, of this highest type of Hebrew prophets and first of the so-called writing prophets — those who committed their utterances to writing — was Amos. We have no books from Samuel, Nathan, Abijah, Elijah, Elisha, Micajah. The reason is that writing for other than

commercial, or industrial, or legal purposes had not yet come into vogue. Moreover, the predictions of these prophets were, for the most part, brief, disconnected utterances, related only to passing occurrences. But by the year 800 B.C. writing for literary purposes had begun and though Amos may have dictated his discourses, they were written in the first quarter of the eighth century before our era. According to the superscription of his book Amos was a cattle owner and rancher, but moved by the divine call of the higher patriotism to quit his ranch, he went to town as the spokesman of Yahweh, as the consecrated reformer of a demoralized community (Amos vii. 14, 15). He breaks in upon a religious meeting at Bethel and frankly tells the people that Yahweh cares nothing for their services, that he hates their Sabbath observance when on week days they practise injustice and inhumanity. Time was when "the day of Yahweh" meant the day of Israel's triumph over her enemies. To Amos, however, it meant the day when Yahweh

would chastise Israel by means of a foreign foe because His people are corrupt, because greed and oppression rule the land (ii, v). Surveying the political, economic and moral conditions, he predicts captivity and other calamity for Israel (vi–ix). Yet he is not utterly without hope. At the close of his withering arraignment of the nation he allows himself to say that Judah shall be established in prosperity as in the days of old and Israel be restored to its land and dwell there forever (ix. 11–15). And this utterance is the germ of that Messianic hope which was steadily developed in the course of the following seven centuries. Contemporary with Amos, though fifteen years his junior in the field of prophecy, was Hosea. Both addressed themselves chiefly to the northern kingdom. But whereas Amos was stern, relentless, fiery in his appeal for national reformation, Hosea was tender, compassionate, gentle; not arguing but pleading with his people, passionately beseeching them to mend their ways. Hosea had been deceived by his wife,

and he uses her infidelity as a simile to rebuke Israel's infidelity to Yahweh. In terms of the conjugal relation Hosea pleads, nor is he wholly without hope of Israel's redemption. For even as in his own home a reconciliation had been brought about with his wife, so might this prefigure the reconciliation that shall come to Israel, forestalling divorce from Yahweh. Hosea saw, as did Amos, the inevitable invasion of the Assyrians and predicted their taking Israel into captivity (ix. 3). Like Amos, too, his final word is one of love and hope, picturing Yahweh as healing the nation's backsliding, turning his anger away, becoming "as dew unto Israel," who shall thereupon "blossom as a lily and cast forth his roots as Lebanon" (xiv. 4–5).

In the year 722 B.C. the prediction of Amos and Hosea was fulfilled. The Assyrian King, Sargon, successor of Shalmanezer, captured Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom, taking away the great majority of the citizens to settle in Samaria and the surrounding country (2 Kings xvii. 24). Thus

Israel became a dependency of Assyria, the first in a succession of foreign subjugations which, while depriving the Hebrews of national independence, proved favorable to their religious growth and this, in turn, provoked their tireless resistance of foreign oppression.

In the southern kingdom, contemporaneous with Amos and Hosea, were Isaiah and Micah. Isaiah is commonly referred to as the first Isaiah, to distinguish him from later prophets whose utterances have been incorporated with his in the book that bears his name. He preached in Jerusalem from 740 to 700 B.C. (Is. vi. 1). He had seen the capture of the northern kingdom. He had watched his own native Judah threatened with invasion by a coalition of the king of Israel and the king of Damascus. Now he saw signs of an Assyrian invasion and advised his king to steer clear of foreign alliances and trust Yahweh to take care of his people, for He would yet usher in "the glory of Judah" by the aid of a descendant of David (ix. 6, 7). But Hezekiah rejected the counsels of Isaiah.

He boldly entered into an alliance with Egypt, only to meet with defeat at the hands of Sennacherib, whose invasion culminated in Judah's subjection to Assyria. In vain did Isaiah call the people to repentance and righteousness, which alone could save. Reliance on the efficacy of sacrifices continued as before; the morality fundamentally essential to prosperity and peace was not practised; trust in the omnipotence of the national God grew weak, and in consequence Yahweh's favor was withheld. Such was Isaiah's diagnosis of the situation and the language and imagery in which he clothed it stands unsurpassed in Hebrew literature for vigor, eloquence and depth of religious sentiment (i, v, x, xi).

Micah, the younger contemporary of Isaiah, had much in his character corresponding to what we saw in Hosea; a sad, passionate, intense nature, overpowered by the corruption of society and its impending fate, yet not without hope for a day of better things (iv. 1–5). He too, like Isaiah, expected the early coming of a king of David's line, and

though in Christian times it was thought that these prophets referred to Jesus, the context and tone of their predictions furnish no warrant for this assumption. Corresponding to what we read in the first chapter of Isaiah's book is the sixth chapter of Micah's, showing how the supreme indignation of these prophets concerned the painful contrast between the profession of the people at their ceremonial worship and the shocking practices of their daily lives. What boots it, says Micah, that you sacrifice to Yahweh? Even though a man should give his first-born son for a guilt-offering, it would avail him nothing. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; for what doth Yahweh require of thee, but to do justly, to love mercy and to walk in humility before thy God" (vi. 8).

Reading the books of these four prophets from the point of view of the sins against which they inveighed, one is instantly impressed by the similarity of these sins to those conspicuous in our own civilization. First and foremost among the sinners who

come under the condemnation of the prophets are certain monopolists. They extort high prices from the poor and show no benevolence or good will toward those who are unable to protect themselves or to meet the high cost of living. Then there are certain retail dealers who cheat in the buying and selling of their goods, whose yard-sticks are short of the standard measure and whose weights are false. Judges, there are, who accept bribes, rendering deceitful decisions for the reward they will reap. Even prophets are found with mercenary motives, professionally consulted by kings and deliberately predicting good fortune for the sake of the liberal fee that will follow. Priests, alas, there are who have no scruples about diverting to their own pockets money contributed for temple repairs. Society people there are, guilty of gross sensualism, of indulgence in carousals and revelries that stir the poor to rebellion. Women, "walking with haughty mien and wanton eyes," overadorned "with chains and bracelets, head tires and sashes, rings and

jewels, hand-mirrors and festal robes," these, Isaiah declares, will be smitten by Yahweh and "branding take the place of beauty."

How familiar the list of evil-doers sounds! How true it is that these prophets though dead yet speak! What a veritable mine of moral inspiration their sermons are, with their powerful appeal, seeking to save the souls of men from their pitiable bondages, their fettering selfishnesses, their humiliating ambitions. How this old, old call for personal morality, for singleness of heart and purity of mind comes home to our modern civilization with its feverish anxieties, its degrading slaveries, its paralyzing devotion to "the things that are seen and transient," its thoughtless disregard of "the things that are unseen and eternal," its passion for tangible palpable results, its blindness to the only results that are of deep and permanent worth! Assuredly must we feel with the lamented James Darmesteter that "to go back to the prophets of Israel is not to retrograde, but to progress," because they were

ahead of their time as well as abreast of it, because they saw that the true life of a people consists in their devotion to the moral ideal, and that without such devotion worship is mere mummery and prosperity animalism. Here is a moral message that answers the immediate need of our time better than any classical masterpiece of antiquity. And while we all agree with Matthew Arnold in his plea for "sweetness and light" in our life, yet more needed to-day is that righteousness, that sincerity, that conscience, which these great moral leaders in Israel made the burden of their appeal.

Passing from the prophets of the eighth century to those of the seventh, we note Nahum and Zephaniah, both of whom saw the waning of Assyrian power and predicted its fall as a punishment for the cruelty and oppression practised upon the people of Yahweh. Then follows Habakkuk, giving point to the prophecy of his predecessors by declaring that the Chaldeans (Babylonians) are to overthrow the Assyrians. This they



MOSES.

did in 606 B.C., Judah thereby becoming a Babylonian dependency. But rebellion breaks out among the Judæans and Nebuchadrezzar, the young king of Babylon, threatens to besiege Jerusalem and carry off her people to his capital on the Euphrates. And now it is that we are introduced to the master prophet of the century, perhaps of all the centuries, at once the most magnificent and the most pathetic personality in ancient Israel. Recall the main political and religious events that transpired toward the close of the seventh century. Egypt had forced Judah to pay tribute, only to be herself laid low by Babylon. Babylon in turn came into possession of Judah as a result of the joint victory of the Medes and Babylonians over the Assyrians. Rebellion in Jerusalem followed, endangering the safety of the city. Manasseh, king of Judah, in the course of his fifty-five years' reign had undone all the religious reforms of his predecessor Hezekiah. He had installed a variety of foreign idolatrous cults, reëstablished the Canaanitish worship of Baal

and the Ashera images, introduced sun-worship and worship of the "hosts of heaven" and rebuilt the "high places" his father had destroyed. In short, the political and religious situation was such as to shake the faith of Jerusalem's citizens as never before. Only one man there was who faltered not nor feared in this crisis of the nation's history; one who takes rank as the greatest statesman in the annals of Jerusalem, the most august and potent personality of the Chaldean period, the noblest figure in ancient Hebrew history, dean of the faculty of Hebrew prophets — Jeremiah. His mission it was to proclaim unpopular truths, to defy public opinion, to rebuke kings and counsellors, to champion hopeless minorities, to exercise gratuitous, fearless censorship over municipal morals, to mourn the degeneracy of cabinets and priesthoods, to see the subjugation of his people by armed foes from without and scheming demagogues from within. Yet not once does he falter or fail in fealty to his high calling, not once does he blemish his stainless crest of

consecration by compromise with truth or right, but preserves his integrity to the bitter end. Daring he was in his protests against wrong, dominated by an heroic imprudence, because his tender heart, sensitive as the strings of a Judæan harp, was cut to the quick by the tribulations of his people. Faithless though they were to their God and to his Law, Jeremiah never lost faith in their regenerative power. To the very last he served them as a prophet, with tireless patience and deathless hope. Statesman that he was he foresaw the rising power of Babylon, and realizing that military resistance was futile, he had the moral courage to advise physical submission to the foe. But the patriotism of a portion of the populace was of a cheaper kind, expressing itself in the cry for rebellion and the breaking of their treaty with Babylon. Whereupon Jeremiah put a wooden yoke about his neck to symbolize the duty of the hour, namely, surrender to a brief Babylonian captivity; brief because Yahweh would bring speedy deliverance when chas-

tisement had done its purifying work in the national heart. But an impatient, fiery member of the militant party, Hananiah by name, seized and broke the wooden yoke. "Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah saying, go tell Hananiah who has broken the bars of wood that thou wilt make in their stead bars of iron" (Jer. xxviii. 12). And history promptly vindicated his forecast by prolonging the captivity for fifty years. But opposition to Jeremiah's ministry came, not only from the rebel element in the community, but also from the flourishing pseudo-prophetic party, of whom he complained that they rocked the people in a false security (vi. 14), that instead of warning the nation, they confirmed it in its sin (xxiii. 17). Smooth talkers they were who, to gain popularity and prosperity, sought to assure the people that no real harm would come to them. Peace, they predicted, would prevail, adding that even if war were to come, Egypt could be relied on for efficient help. They advocated a kind of primitive Monroe Doctrine according to which

the armies of Pharaoh could be counted on in an emergency. But when the crisis came, Pharaoh had pressing business of his own to attend to. Had there been newspapers in Jeremiah's time, he would have written editorials on the political situation and the duty of patriots. As it was, he put a yoke round his neck and taking his stand by the temple gate advised acquiescence in the captivity which Yahweh had preordained as the instrument to bring the nation to righteousness. His advice was not taken, but the city was. Surely if ever a man fell on evil times, it was Jeremiah, for he had to face the severest ordeal that a patriot and prophet could be called to endure. He had to stand by and see his country invaded by a foreign foe, his beloved Jerusalem sacked, burned and laid waste. He did all in his power to stem the tide of national decline and for a reward he was pilloried in the public square, lowered into a muddy cistern, dungeoned in prison. During the terrible siege of Jerusalem, that was to end in the destruction of the Jewish

state, Jeremiah bought a field in the heart of the town and executed the deed of contract to demonstrate his faith that Judah would be restored and a glorious future await the people of Yahweh. While in prison he dictated to his secretary, Baruch, the sermons he had preached in the course of his twenty-two years' ministry, bidding him read them aloud in the temple on the next fast-day. Word of this plan reached the ears of the priests and they promptly notified the nobles, who, in turn, apprised the king. He was sitting in his winter palace before the open fireplace when the manuscript, which he had ordered to be brought to him, was read. Calling for a knife he cut the scrolls into strips and threw them into the fire. Thus did history repeat itself. How often have ecclesiastical and political despots tried to crush free thought and free speech by burning the books and the bodies of the authors, whose convictions were brighter than flames and, like asbestos, withstood the fire that was meant to consume them! Nay more, the

ashes of the books and of the writers have proved powerful fertilizers of repudiated truth.

Jeremiah rewrote the sermons and we are told that "he added much more besides," only, however, to be banished to Egypt, that treacherous land against which he had warned his fellow-countrymen in vain. There, after more than forty years of consecrated service, he died a martyr's death, stoned by the people for whose kinsmen he had labored so devotedly and so long. Surely to him we may fittingly apply those noble lines of the last verse of the last poem from Browning's pen, for Jeremiah also was

> "One who never turned his back,
> But marched breast forward,
> Never doubted clouds would break;
> Never dreamed though right were worsted,
> Wrong would triumph;
> Held we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better;
> Sleep to wake."

The prophets of the exile in Babylon were Ezekiel and the second Isaiah. Though primarily a priest, deeply concerned about the ritual (for in Babylon there was neither

Jewish temple nor sacrifice), Ezekiel fulfilled the part of prophet, witness those chapters of his book in which he arraigns foreign nations and comforts his fellow-countrymen with the conviction that the captivity was designed by Yahweh to purify his people and prepare them for blessings yet to be.[1] Ezekiel anticipated, not only the restoration of the people to Canaan, to be ruled over by a king of David's line, as of old, but also the rebuilding of the temple and on a more magnificent scale than before. In the light of this expectation he drew up a constitution, or religious code, for the new era. It was drafted in the form of a vision, replete with imagery that suggests the influence of Babylonian beliefs upon the prophet's own thought.[2] But when the people returned to Jerusalem, they were altogether too poor to execute Ezekiel's extensive and magnificent plans.

Toward the close of the Babylonian exile, Persia had grown so powerful that to the statesmen-prophets it seemed probable that

[1] Ezek. xxv–xxxii, xxxvii. [2] *Ibid.* xl–xlviii.

release from captivity would soon be obtained. With the Persian conquest of Babylonia their expectation was fulfilled. Chief among Hebrew leaders at the close of the exilian era was the second Isaiah. He has been so named to distinguish him from the earlier Isaiah of Hezekiah's time, to whose writings those of this prophet were somehow appended, perhaps because his name also was Isaiah. Certain at least it is, in the light of internal evidence, that the last twenty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah belong to a period two centuries or more removed from those earlier chapters that are identified with the first Isaiah. Our interest in the exilian Isaiah centres upon his poetic, deeply religious interpretation of "the righteous remnant" of the nation in Babylon, atoning by their suffering for the sins of all the rest. Nowhere in Hebrew literature is there a loftier description of innocent souls suffering and atoning for the sins of others than in the passage from the book of Isaiah which extends from the thirteenth verse of the fifty-second chapter to

the end of the fifty-third. Here the spiritual kernel of the nation is personified under the title of "the suffering servant of Yahweh," undergoing all manner of affliction for the sake of the unrighteous multitude. No wonder this passage came to be applied to Jesus and to be construed as a prediction of his advent, albeit that the context clearly shows that the author had only his own contemporaries in mind, the personified "righteous remnant" of the nation. Very significant is the language in which the second Isaiah described the great Persian King, Cyrus. He refers to him as "Yahweh's shepherd," as "the Anointed One," the "righteous."[1] Under his régime it was that the exilian hope of restoration to Canaan was fulfilled. In 535 B.C. Cyrus gave permission to the captives in Babylon to return to Jerusalem and a goodly portion of the people availed themselves of the privilege. Foremost among the prophets of the return were Haggai and Zechariah.[2] They exhort the people to rebuild the

[1] xli. 2; xlv. 1–4.

[2] The author of i–viii.

temple, live in righteousness and hope for the blessing of their God.

With the rebuilding of the temple the priests were once more in the ascendant, and their importance was considerably accentuated by the fact that political independence had long been a thing of the past, so that interest came to be increasingly focussed upon the national religion. Add to this the steady growth of Pentateuchal legislation, designed as it was to keep the nation loyal to Yahweh and also distinct from the surrounding peoples, and we have a further reason for the increasing dominance of the priesthood. No wonder, then, that in the fifth and fourth centuries prophecy should have declined, Malachi, Joel and the later Zechariah[1] prophesying, indeed, yet showing unmistakable signs of the change that was taking place in the religious organization and life of the people. In other words, with the development of the religious "Law" and the concomitant rise of its guardians to the highest place in the nation's esteem, the

[1] Zech. ix–xi, xii–xiv.

written Word took the place of the immediate revelation of Yahweh to his servants, the prophets.

Early in the history of the Christian church, it was proposed to withdraw the Old Testament from the canon of Christian scriptures and make it consist of the New Testament alone, but the proposition failed to carry and deservedly so. For it would have robbed the Christian scriptures of that ethical message of the great moral leaders in Israel, which takes rank among the supreme and permanent spiritual assets of the race. In the hearts of Israel's prophets the sense of duty burned with an unsurpassed intensity and glow. And this, as Professor Adler has recently observed, "explains their capacity for moral indignation, the august authority with which they speak, as though the Moral Law were uttering itself through them." It explains also the precision with which they point to the root-sin of the nation, the lightning stroke with which they smite the guilty soul and the soothing balm of comfort

they instil into doubting and despondent hearts.

Not only did there burn within the prophets the sense of duty, but there also shone the star of hope, even in the darkest days of national corruption and dissolution. Nor is there anything more wonderful and inspiring than the undying faith of these great moral leaders in the coming of a day of better things, a faith which took on increasing definiteness and concreteness with the years, culminating in the conception of a Messianic Kingdom of God on earth, a Commonwealth of Man, a City of the Light, "from whose borders wrong is banished, where justice reigns supreme o'er all, and only righteous men and women dwell." Despite all the sufferings of chastisement for idolatry and sin, never did the patriotic hope die out that Yahweh would redeem his chosen people and reëstablish them in their former home.

Other nations, notably the Persians, have shown themselves capable of patriotic effort for freedom and resistance to foreign pressure

through centuries of subjugation. But the Jewish patriotism is unlike them all because it was quickened and organized by religious feeling, by the mighty conception of a covenant according to which Yahweh had chosen Israel from among all the nations of the earth and had promised his blessing forever on conditions that they prove loyal and obedient. In the light of that covenant each new subjugation in turn was interpreted, chastisement being but the intended preparation for a glorious future. Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, Persia, Greece, Rome, each in turn held the Hebrews in subjection, yet never did they lose their grip on the belief that all the nations of the earth would come to the knowledge of Yahweh and His Law and so share the Kingdom He would prepare for His chosen ones.

Even Amos, whose prophecy is preëminently pessimistic, has a vision of Israel, sifted as is corn in a sieve, and Yahweh suffering not a single grain to fall to the earth.[1] Hosea sees the branches of Israel

[1] Amos ix. 9.

spread their beauty like those of the olive tree and all who dwell under their shadow rejoicing in the ways of the Lord.[1] Isaiah, living in the thick of the Assyrian invasion, draws a dark picture of what must follow the corruption of Israel, but beyond the gloom he descries the outline of a regenerated nation ruled by a blameless King in righteousness and in peace.[2] Jeremiah, though chastisement is his dominant thought, never believed in the ruin of his people. Rather did he see in Nebuchadrezzar the instrument whereby Yahweh accomplished his beneficent punishment of a recalcitrant people. Into captivity must they go but only to be in due time restored to their own land and live prosperously under one of their own princes and with a new covenant, Yahweh writing His Law into their hearts.[3] The exilian Isaiah carries the prophetic optimism further still, idealizing Israel herself into a divinely appointed instrument for the enlightening and

[1] Hosea xiv. 6. [2] Is. xi. 1–9.
[3] Jer. xxxi. 31–34.

healing of the nations. They shall see Jerusalem the capital of a heaven on earth in which all the world will be blessed.[1] Joel and the third Zechariah, living in the period of the Greek rule, echo the exalted strain, while the author of the ninth chapter of Isaiah, the contemporary of these prophets, enlarges upon the vision still more, telling of the Davidic King whose dynasty shall last forever and who shall be called "Immanuel, Wonderful, Counsellor, Prince of Peace."

And when prophecy had died out in Israel and given place to priestly and scribal authorities, the ancient patriotic hope still continued to glow, witness the Apocalyptic literature, the books of the "Apocrypha" and of the "Pseudepigrapha," notably the "Psalters of Solomon" in which the term "Messiah" is applied to the Davidic King, coming in glory to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. Thence we pass to the still later portraitures of the New Testament books, in the latest of which, written in the middle of the

[1] Is. lxvi. 20–22.

second century of our era, we read the pathetic query, "Where is the promise of his coming, for since the fathers fell asleep all things remain as they were from the beginning." [1]

From that day to this the heavens have remained silent; the old order of the world has gone on as of yore and Israel's hope, born in the days of Amos and developed throughout the succeeding seven centuries into a mighty "Messianic" expectation, remains void of fulfilment.

Was it, then, an empty, baseless dream? Nay, rather was it the expression of that deathless hope in the human heart that truth will prevail and justice be victorious. Such, at least, was the essence, the soul of that age-long Hebrew hope. Nor is there any other factor in social progress so indispensable as this very expectancy. "Unless your soul dwells in Utopia," said President Jordan, "life is not worth the keeping." What, under heaven, is there to sustain us in our work for social reform except the spell exercised upon us

[1] 2 Pet. iii. 4.

by the vision of the Commonwealth of Man, the expectation of triumphant justice and brotherhood as a normal occurrence that must some day come to pass? What thought, I ask, is uppermost in our minds? Ah, there is only one thought worthy to be treasured there, the thought that was cherished by the prophets of Israel, the thought of never dying realities to which we are allied, the thought of a soul in man impelled by a mighty urge to ends of infinite worth, the thought that we are less than the lower orders of animal life if we be not moved with an unceasing purpose to fit ourselves for supernal things. Strip the ancient Hebrew hope of its local, transient element, and what remains is an everlasting source of inspiration for America and for the world. 'Tis the thought of an ideal social order yet to be, in which no one will treat another as merely a means to his ends, but also as an end in himself; in which life, liberty, the pursuit of happiness, culture, will be a possibility for all instead of for only the few; in which all men and women shall attain, not as serfs, but as

free intelligent agents, through the willing coöperation of each with all, the things that are most worth while. Such is the permanent in the transient Messianic hope of ancient Israel. It warrants the statement, that as long as man lives on this planet, they who wish to make progress in the upper zones of their being must turn to Israel for inspiration, to those prophets of the Old Testament who saw in righteousness the very core of religion and who held with unceasing and unflagging zeal the mighty expectation of a coming Commonwealth of Man.

VI

JESUS

VI

JESUS

IN this series of lectures on great moral leaders of the Orient we have consulted only first-hand sources of information. What, then, is the fountain-source of our knowledge concerning Jesus? Unlike Confucius and Mohammed, Jesus wrote nothing. His immediate disciples, with the possible exception of Matthew, wrote nothing. The members of the first Christian Church at Jerusalem wrote nothing, being illiterate, poor and preoccupied with the practical needs of the community.[1] The earliest writings in the New Testament are letters ascribed to the apostle Paul. According to his own testimony, he never saw Jesus except in a vision and these letters, written twenty-five years after the death of Jesus, furnish no information con-

[1] 1 Cor. i. 6.

cerning his life. They begin with his death and resurrection and the theory of salvation built thereon. "Acts," "Revelation," the non-Pauline epistles, no one of these throws any light on the life of Jesus. The "fourth gospel" has theological and ethical rather than historical and biographical value.[1] Thus we are restricted to the first three gospels, the so-called "Synoptics," since they "look together," from a common standpoint, at Jesus' life. Comparing them, we find that despite their various points of difference, they present a story of the life of Jesus on which all three agree, and which the late Prof. E. A. Abbott of London has entitled "the triple tradition." Turning to this harmony of the Synoptics, we note how little there is on which all three agree compared to their total content. It reminds us of the "Gathas," where we observed how little authentic information there is concerning Zoroaster. Excepting only him, less is known of Jesus than of any other of the great moral leaders of the Orient. We do not

[1] John i. 1–18; xx. 31.

know the year, month, day, or place of his birth. December 25 is only the guess of the early Christian missionaries at the time they were converting the Roman Empire to Christianity. Bethlehem as the birthplace of Jesus was only a "Messianic" guess on the part of the authors of the first and third gospels. Still, meagre as are the details of Jesus' life recorded in the triple tradition, dense as is our ignorance concerning eighteen of his thirty years on earth, silent as are the Synoptics on many points about which we long to be informed, obvious and numerous as are the defects of the record itself, the personality of Jesus stands forth in clear and definite outline. The notion that he never existed at all, — first entertained by the "Docetists" in the second century and recently revived, on other grounds, by native and foreign scholars, — is not to be accepted merely because of the disappointment engendered by reading the record. In that case we should be obliged to discredit the existence of Julius Cæsar or Hannibal. Nor, again, will it do to

deny the historicity of Jesus on the ground that the chief classical writers of the first century make only passing allusion to him. For it must be remembered that Jesus was born in a remote, insignificant, despised province of the Roman empire and was therefore regarded by the authorities at Rome as an obscure upstart, a creator of sedition, a Galilean peasant, reproducing a familiar local sensation. Had Jesus been born at Rome, or Alexandria, or some other important centre of the empire, and there fulfilled his mission, we would have reason to expect fuller details from the Roman historians of his time. But even as it is, we have the testimony of Tacitus, whom Gibbon and Froude have praised as an authority of the first rank and whose evidence is not to be esteemed a "forgery of Bracciolini," as certain shallow radicals have sought to show. The passage is to be found in the fifteenth book of the "Annals" and every impartial reader will feel from the context and form, despite the brevity of the passage, its genuineness. "Christ, from whom the Christian sect de-

rived its name, had been put to death in the reign of Tiberius by the procurator, Pontius Pilate." Thus the argument for the non-existence of Jesus, based on the scanty information furnished by the earliest Christian sources, and on the incidental, brief references to Jesus in contemporary classical literature, breaks down. And the same may be said, I think, of the other current arguments designed to disprove the historicity of Jesus. Looking at the subject from a positive standpoint, the belief that Jesus did exist is grounded, not only on the testimony we have just considered, but also on the portraiture of the Messianic function as attributed to Jesus in the Synoptics, so radically different from the popular Jewish conception of the office as to be absolutely inexplicable there, had not some one actually impersonated the part. Furthermore, the many legends woven about his personality prove, as does nothing else, not only his existence, but his spiritual greatness. For such stories as are related of him did not originate until one equal to generating such ideas

had lived. Legends always adorn, they do not create personalities. They are the vines of grateful reverence and appreciation that twine about the tree of soul-greatness. Weems did not start with a hatchet story and other legends and then attach them to a Washington. Nor is the Lincoln myth, now in process of formation, independent of the historical emancipator of the slaves. Still more strongly is the historicity of Jesus attested by the reason for the conversion of Constantine and for the triumph of Christianity over the most powerful of its early rivals, Mithraism. The reason was that the Christians could point to an actual human being as their pattern and ideal, and no follower of Mithraism denied it; whereas the Mithraists had for their supreme object of veneration only an abstraction, a beautiful, ennobling personification of light; but, after all, only an ethereal abstraction. For this reason, above all else, did Christianity win the battle of the sects for control of the Roman empire. And Constantine was sagacious enough to see the superiority of a religion

with a human founder and guide to one whose leader was only a product of the imagination of his worshippers.

Of the physical appearance of Jesus we know absolutely nothing. No authentic portrait has come down to us. We search the literature of the first century in vain for some allusion to the subject. Yet why should any reference have been made to the personal appearance of Jesus? Did not his Jewish contemporaries in Palestine expect his return to earth before their own generation had passed away? Had he not said he would return? Why, then, should there be any thought of describing his appearance or even of recording what he had said and done? Popular expectancy was such as to preclude concern for a biography of Jesus and only when hope waned and disappointment over the delay in his coming grew intense, did the serious work of recollecting, writing and transmitting begin. The earliest reference to the physical appearance of Jesus is found in the works of Justin, the martyr, written about the middle of the second century.

Jesus, he said, looked just as the Scriptures said he would look, quoting the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, where it is written, "He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we see him there is no beauty that we should desire him." Thus, reading into this passage, a description of Jesus' appearance, Justin concluded he was not externally attractive. In the absence of reliable information we are, as Renan remarked, "at liberty to think as we please." This, indeed, is what all painters and sculptors throughout the Christian centuries have done. And of all historic representations of Jesus, perhaps that of Leonardo, — the central figure of his "Last Supper," — satisfied and stood supreme, because of its marvellous rendering of the distinctive qualities of Jesus' character.

Socially, Jesus was not at all the ascetic that mediævalism and its modern representatives would have us believe. Though he had much in common with the Essenes, there is no evidence to indicate that he was of their number, nor have we any reason to think he was the precursor of Puritan abstinences and



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prohibitions. On the contrary, the Synoptics impress us with a pronounced sense of the humanity of Jesus, of the blood in his veins running ruddy and warm, of his wit and humor, his responsiveness to every experience that would make a strong human appeal. We have the stories of his dining with distinguished persons and the criticism his acceptance of their invitations provoked. We have the parables, with their sensitiveness to beauty and joy and love. Add to these the tender verses that relate his taking little children in his arms and blessing them and the story of the wedding-feast at Cana which, though peculiar to the fourth gospel, may be rooted in a genuine tradition that escaped the attention of the Synoptists.

Intellectually, Jesus was a free thinker, free from the trammels of tradition, free to follow his own independent thought. At every crisis in his life he proved himself a sceptic in the true and noble sense of that word. According to its derivation, the word sceptic means one who shades his eyes to look steadfastly

at an object. The sceptic is one who shades his eyes from prejudice, predilection, bias, from everything calculated to prevent his looking steadfastly for the truth, eager above all else not to be deceived or misled in his search for truth. Hence, consecrated doubt was a characteristic of Jesus' thought; the doubt that puts things to the proof and so strengthens faith. At the age of twelve it was doubt that drew him to the temple to seek solutions for vexing question from the doctors of the law. When he was twenty-eight or twenty-nine, it was doubt that drove him into the wilderness, there to settle the open question concerning his choice of a Messianic career. A little later, it was doubt that led him into the garden and the cold midnight air, the agony of Gethsemane culminating in conquered doubt. And when, at last, he came to the cross, there every wound pleaded with silent eloquence that men should be sincere, consecrated, loyal to their inmost convictions even though their only reward be a crown of thorns, their only sympathy the powerless

tears of friends, their deathbed a cross. To estimate in any adequate degree a truly great personality is one of the most difficult of tasks. Indeed it defies achievement, the very greatness of the personality forbidding analysis and exhaustive explanation. This much, however, may be said of such an one, viz. that he owes his greatness, not so much to the possession of any attributes that differentiate him from others, as to his own sublime embodiment of qualities that are universal. Sincerity, sympathy, consecration, trust; these are attributes of character known in every age and in every land. And the essential greatness of Jesus consists in his particular manifestation of these universal qualities. Differ as men do in their theories of the person of Jesus, all unite in their recognition of these cardinal attributes of his character; all are agreed that Jesus will be forever remembered, reverenced and loved for his unswerving loyalty to his convictions, his unsurpassed sympathy for men, his unalloyed consecration to a great life-purpose, his undying trust in a Power

higher than man. The time limit prescribed for this lecture forbids my dwelling at length upon these qualities. I must be content merely to touch upon them and reserve for another season what must be omitted now.

1. The crowning attribute in the character of Jesus was his loyalty to conviction, his white-mindedness, his spiritual integrity. His soul was on fire with mighty convictions and he held to them with an adamantine inflexibility. He believed that soon the existing order of humanity would pass away and be replaced by a new and higher type, "the Kingdom of Heaven," a society in which justice and love would be the sole ruling principles of conduct; prosperity, peace and joy be the possession of all who dwell therein. Despite all the oppression, cruelty, despotism of his day, despite all the unpromising political and social conditions of his time, Jesus dared to entertain the magnificent dream of a renovated world. He believed that morality is progressive, that the ethical code of one age is not necessarily sufficient for the needs of the next.

Strong and deep as was his reverence for the Sinai Commandments he yet felt that they did not exhaust the possibilities of the human spirit. He respected the authority of Moses, but he did not regard it as final. If we would be like Jesus, then, like him, we must be true to truth and dare, if need be, to differ from him as he dared to differ from Moses. Rather than be false to his convictions and betray his soul, he preferred persecution, ignominy, death. The luxury of his convictions was more precious to him than the luxury of existence. Life to him meant an untrammelled mind, an unpolluted conscience, an unsullied soul. And in these days of intellectual dishonesties, practised to a deplorable extent by clergy and laity alike, how tremendous is the need of turning again to this crowning grace in the character of Jesus and drawing inspiration from the contemplation of it. While he was still on earth there were those to whom Jesus said, "Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" And this class has never been left without a witness in any age.

2. To understand his unsurpassed sympathy for man we have only to recall the age in which it appeared. An age of cruelty, tyranny, oppression; an age in which provinces were sacked to pay the cost of gorgeous ceremonies and processions of royalty, an age in which the wealth of colonies was drained to furnish sumptuous feasts for selfish statesmen, an age in which brotherhood was a synonym for clique or class. In such an age Jesus revived the ancient protest of humanity, summing up his solution of the social problem in terms of sympathy. Love was to be the solvent in which all hatreds and jealousies would melt away. The redeeming power of a great spiritual love, — that was the gospel he brought to his age and to our age, too; for we know that if we are fine enough, and have enough of the heart culture that was in Jesus, if our love is strong enough, deep enough, wise enough, patient enough, then no human soul, however degraded, can be beyond the reach of our redeeming love. Truly does the sympathy that was in Jesus flood the gospel story

as the waters of the sea flood its basin and shore. His love went out hopefully, confidently, helpfully to all sorts and conditions of men, even to the very lowest, because he believed that the essential worth of each human being lies only and always in his potentialities, in that image of the divine in which he was potentially made. Even in the abyss of shame and wretchedness of the erring woman, he held that there lies a hidden power of salvation, a possibility of rebirth into the moral life. Jesus by his gentleness denied the existence of hopeless castaways. To him who prided himself on his righteousness Jesus opposed the sinner who smote himself on the breast while asking pardon for his sins and declared this latter nearer perfection than the former. The prodigal son no less than the elder son in the parable is, in Jesus' eyes, a child of the Eternal Goodness. Thus, to give courage to the sinful, even to the most hardened; to reanimate their energies by words of hope, even when to human view all seems lost; never to despair of finding, even in the worst of men, some germ

of that divine life which he has stifled and profaned, but has not been able to destroy, some remains of that moral dignity on which he has trampled, but not killed; to abate the pride of the self-righteous by making them sensible of their wretchedness, to humiliate the self-complacent by showing them that their self-satisfaction is the sign of their backwardness, to open to all the vision of ever closer approximation to the perfect, on the road to which all have entered, differing only in the degree of progress they have made, — this is the sublime method of the gospel of Jesus.

3. What was the special life-purpose to which he consecrated his life? It was to prepare the largest possible number of men and women for membership in the new Kingdom of Heaven, so soon to appear upon the earth. There can be no grander aim than that. And there is more hope for the world in one Jesus, with such an aim, than in ten thousand men, trained to scientific habits of thought, yet without any such transcendent aim to which their thought shall tend.

4. Though the God-idea has undergone considerable change since Jesus' day, his trust in God, in "the Power that makes for righteousness," in the triumph of truth, justice and love, remains unchanged and indispensable. How imperative it is, that amid the inequities and iniquities of modern life, we possess this spirit of trust. In our fight against these evils what is there to sustain us, to save us from being victimized by scepticism and pessimism; what is there to prevent the loss of spiritual poise and peace, except the laying firm hold of this trust that was in the heart of Jesus?

Speaking for myself, — and I have no right to speak for any one else, — I confess that while I cannot accept the teachings of Jesus with reference to marriage, divorce, wealth, intellectual and æsthetic pursuits; while I cannot share his belief in a miraculously established Kingdom of Heaven on earth, I do find in him an ever inspiring exemplar of sincerity, sympathy, consecration and trust. If I were to say in just one word what Jesus is to me it would be *inspiration*. Who of us

can contemplate his loyalty to conviction and at the same time be indifferent to that which is holiest and highest in ourselves? Who of us can meditate upon his sympathy for man and then turn a deaf ear to the calls for sympathy and practical helpfulness that appeal to us from every side? Who of us can ponder his devotion to a life-aim transcendently beautiful and then be indifferent to the promptings of the inner voice that bids us live the divine life? Who can recall his deep-seated trust in the ultimate triumph of truth and right, the reign of justice and love, and not feel moved to a like peace-giving trust?

We hear a great deal in our day about "living a spiritual life." Considerable vagueness and piousness have gathered about that phrase; yet in its essence it is nothing but living this very life that Jesus lived, manifesting in our lesser lives that same spiritual greatness that was revealed by him. To stand upon our own feet, to exercise a manly self-reliance, to maintain our own convictions, let the opposition be what it may, to cultivate the spirit of

sympathy and helpfulness for our fellow-men, and, above all, to be steadfastly devoted to an ideal life-aim, all the while sustained and inspired by faith in the Eternal Right, — this is what we understand by living a spiritual life. And no more radiant example of it has ever been furnished the world than that which we see in Jesus.

In the transition from Judaism to Christianity Jesus occupies a very definite and distinctive place. Just as Gotama, the Buddha, was born and died a Brahman and as out of his protest against certain defects in Brahmanism Buddhism arose, so Jesus, the Christ, was born and died a Jew, and out of his protest against certain defects in Judaism there arose the Christian ethics, for which the apostle Paul furnished the theological framework. What was this protest of Jesus? It was a protest against the external, formal character of contemporary Jewish ethics; against a morality of mere conformity to and compliance with the demands of an external standard of conduct, and in favor of a morality of the

spirit that takes account of the hidden motives behind all human actions. "Fulfil the law of righteousness,"—this was the Hebrew answer to the question, What is the chief end of man? That law originally consisted of a few simple rules, but eventually it was expanded into the elaborate system of legislation found in the Pentateuch, and this, in turn, became the basis for further legislation, preserved in the Talmud. Thus by the time Jesus appeared Judaism had developed an immense mass of rules and regulations for the conduct of life, and goodness meant conformity to the requirements of this outward standard. But by its very externalism and formal character the system tended to draw the heart and the will away from those inward sources of right action on which alone their true moral quality depends. Life became split up into innumerable forms of conduct, each having its own particular law or rule, to violate which was sin. No distinction being drawn between kinds of sin, it was held that he who offends in one point of the law offends in all, — a posi-

tion clearly stated in the epistle of James (ii. 10). As a result Judaism tended to despiritualize life and by its stress on conformity to an external standard of conduct as the test of goodness, to make the latter a garment that might be put on or off, rather than a constant, maintained habit of the soul. Already in the seventh century this danger in the development of Judaism was recognized by the Deuteronomist. Read his passionate plea in the thirtieth chapter of Deuteronomy that men should look within and see Yahweh's will written in their own hearts. Later came Jeremiah and Ezekiel with their appeal for the performance of the righteousness that is in the heart. Still later came the psalmists of the Greek and of the Maccabean period, with their spiritual songs on the need of "a clean heart" and of "renewal of spirit," intimating their consciousness of a morality of the spirit which goes back of rules and regulations to motives and aims and which is therefore deeper than the morality of conformity and compliance. But no one, not even the great Hillel, — who

was an old man when Jesus was an infant, — had sought to separate this spiritual righteousness from the system of legislation in which it lay embedded and lift it to a commanding place in the ordering of daily life. Mark you, it must not be said that Judaism was deficient in spirituality. Any one familiar with the literature between the Old and New Testaments knows there was no lack of this grace even when the legal system was most elaborate and detailed. But no one had extricated this morality of the spirit — recognized and taught as it was by the immediate predecessor of Jesus — out from the mass of legislation and made it the corner-stone of the moral life. This it remained for Jesus to achieve and in achieving it, he transcended the Judaism of his time. Perceiving that the spirit behind an act is what gives it moral worth, Jesus took this spiritual morality out from the mass of rules where Hillel had left it and made it the supreme and controlling principle of conduct. Higher than the morality of obedience to an external standard of Jewish law is the morality

of obedience to an internal standard which cannot be gauged by any mechanical means whatsoever. Higher than visible conformity to rules regarding what must be done and still more regarding what must not be done, is the invisible motive behind that conformity. Such was the contribution of Jesus to Judaism. Herein lay his originality. I grant with the distinguished Rabbi Hirsch that Jesus uttered no new maxims, that one can match every precept of the sermon on the mount in contemporary or earlier Jewish literature. I grant that in method and in thought Jesus was a Jewish "haggadist," that his similes are indigenous to the "Midrash" and were frequently used in the picture-language of the rabbinical homilies. I grant that in none of these respects has he the slightest claim to originality, yet it still remains true that there is another respect in which that claim of originality may be legitimately made for him. For the original reformer is not only he who first conceives a fruitful idea, but also he who plants it in many minds and fertilizes it there by the persuasive

power of his own quickening personality. To this type of original reformers Jesus belonged. He preached the loftiest moral conceptions his race had won, and vitalized them by his commanding, winning presence. Even as the transcendent merit of the tree consists in its drawing from the surrounding air, earth and water, the materials wherewith to build the strength of its trunk and the beauty of its foliage, so the transcendent merit of Jesus lay in his drawing from earlier and contemporary literature the material wherewith to make his gospel a source of strength and inspiration, stamping what he borrowed with his own spiritual genius.[1] And this genius showed itself nowhere more grandly than in the way he related his gospel to the Jewish law, presenting it as simply a development, an expansion, a deepening of that law. Jesus never cut himself off from Judaism, never attempted to organize a new religion. On the contrary, he was throughout his entire life a loyal Jew, observing all the ordinances. He

[1] Rabbi E. G. Hirsch, The Crucifixion.

kept the fasts and feasts of the Hebrew calendar.[1] He insisted that the ceremonial law should be scrupulously obeyed.[2] He even went so far as to say that not one jot or tittle of the law would remain unfulfilled while heaven and earth remained.[3] Lest any one should think him a ruthless, reckless iconoclast, a negative revolutionist in religion, he said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am come to carry them out." And he might have added, to develop, to expand them, to bring out their latent deeper meaning; for this was precisely what he did. "Ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old," quoting from the twentieth chapter of Exodus, "thou shalt do no murder." "But I say unto you that whosoever is as much (as angry) with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment." It is not enough, he contends, to obey the sixth commandment, not enough to stop at the law of murder; you must go down to the source of

[1] Mk. xiv. 12. [2] Mt. xxiii. 2.

[3] Mt. v. 18.

murder in the passion of anger in the heart that it may be utterly consumed and thus no more provoke to murderous deeds. It is not enough to refrain from the adulterous act; you must go down to the source of it in the evil desire of the heart,—there lies the root of the sin, and duty calls for its extirpation. Purify the inner springs of conduct, be not content with avoidance of evil deeds, remember that not only the act itself constitutes the evil, but, still more, the prompting of the heart that leads to it. Go down below the killing to the wrath, below the adultery to the lust. Again, he bids his hearers love their enemies and contrasts his precept with the ancient saying thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. Here Jesus quotes no passage from the Old Testament but expresses the actual attitude and spirit of Hebrew ethics in Old Testament times. The highest ethical reach of the Old Testament is love of one's *personal* enemy. Nowhere in its pages is love of *national* enemies inculcated. On the contrary, we observe that the logic of wor-

shipping Yahweh as Israel's God and of regarding Israel as His chosen people led directly to hatred of foreigners (enemies) as an inevitable consequence of this unique privilege. Jeremiah, the Deuteronomist, and the author of the one hundred and thirty-ninth psalm (to cite typical instances), regarded hatred of foreigners as not only inevitable, but also praiseworthy. In unqualified opposition to this attitude Jesus pleads for a cosmopolitan love that shall extend beyond one's personal enemies to the hated Romans. Oppressors and persecutors though they be, yet out of very love for them, he says, pray for them. In bold and powerful contrast to the cry of the psalmist, "Do I not hate them that hate thee, O Lord,"[1] there stands the exquisite simile of the sunshine and the rain which the Divine Goodness gives to the just and to the unjust alike, a simile which Jesus uses to exhort his hearers to be as impartial and as unrestrained and as unbounded in *their* love. The supreme commandment of Jesus was, "Be ye perfect,

[1] Ps. cxxxix. 21; cf. Ps. cxxxvii. 8, 9.

even as your Father in heaven is perfect." In that utterance Jesus gave infinite significance to every humblest human being, because it implies that there are infinite possibilities in every child of God.

The gospel of Christianity, therefore, as derived from Jesus, consists, not in obedience to an external standard, but in what may be called spiritual righteousness, or the morality of the spirit. Of that gospel there are hints in the Jewish literature of earlier times, but no one had succeeded in giving it special emphasis, no one had detached it from the legal system in which it was embedded and made of it a new moral issue. This is what Jesus did and it marks the distinctive characteristic of his message. According to this, each human being is a child of God, endowed with power to come into perfect harmony with Him, and the single-hearted desire for that harmony is the supreme motive for doing what is right. To become truly children of their heavenly Father, to become worthy of their divine kinship, this, he held,

is the highest reason why men and women should do what is right. Hence the ideal life, according to Jesus, is the life of the spirit, the life of union with the Eternal Life, the life of self-dedication to supreme holiness. Note that the concern of Jesus is exclusively with individual men and women and their reproduction of the divine love. The problem of improving the political, social, industrial conditions of Palestine lay wholly outside his sphere. He looked to a higher than human agency for the transformation of existing conditions, confining his attention to the immediate need of each individual soul, viz. to become fitted for membership in the coming Kingdom of God on earth. Jesus, therefore, was not a socialist, as is sometimes claimed. He came, not to readjust external conditions, not to attempt any reorganization of society on altered economic and political principles, but only to refine men's hearts, to quicken in each human soul he addressed the sense of its divine origin, and its infinite possibilities and to show forth the real moral worth of human actions.

Just as Buddhism became an organized religion only after the death of Gotama, so Christianity only after the death of Jesus. It is to the apostle Paul that we must turn as the founder of organized Christianity. It was he who cut loose from Judaism by the surrender of his allegiance to the Jewish law and ceremonial and the adoption of the crucified and risen Jesus as the new and only means of salvation. Paul took the ground that man is constitutionally incapable of fulfilling the law of righteousness. In the seventh chapter of his letter to the Romans he laid bare the innermost experience of his soul, his utter wretchedness because of the warfare between his carnal and his spiritual nature, the latter overpowered by the former in the struggle to fulfil the law of righteousness. Some other means of salvation must be found. Pondering the problem, there came to him the wonderful story of Jesus. Here, thought Paul, is One who did succeed in fulfilling the law of righteousness and whose crucifixion was the symbol of his compassion

for sin-stained man, taking it upon himself to serve as man's Redeemer. None of the gospels had as yet been written when Paul reached his solution of the problem. Believing that Jesus differed from all other beings in *kind* as well as degree, Paul thought that if only the perfect righteousness of this exceptional person could be borrowed, salvation would be secured. And he argued that it could be borrowed by the exercise of "faith," meaning thereby a mystical "putting on of the Lord Jesus Christ," being dominated in all one's thought, feeling and conduct by the spirit that was in him. Thus, whereas Jesus was buoyed up by the sense of the divine power with which man has been endowed, making him equal to the task of doing the Divine will, Paul was overcome by a sense of moral incapacity and turned to the virtue-power of the crucified and risen Christ, believing that thereby alone could man come into at-one-ment with God. Upon this belief the new religion was founded, a Christian being differentiated from the representatives

of every other religion by his belief in the exceptional character of Jesus, who alone of all men was able, through his perfection, to fulfil the law of righteousness and thereby became the fitting instrument to bring about the reconciliation of man to God.

VII

MOHAMMED

VII

MOHAMMED

CHRONOLOGICALLY the latest of the great moral leaders whose life and work we are studying is Mohammed. Like Moses, the Prophets, Jesus and Paul, Mohammed belonged to the Semitic branch of the human family. He was the founder of the least appreciated and most misunderstood of the world's great religions. It originated thirteen centuries ago on the Arabian peninsula, where the streams of commerce and culture met and mingled in the Middle Ages, where the markets of exchange were stationed or the treasures of India and the products of the Mediterranean coasts. There this religion was established in the unprecedented short period of twenty years and, unlike many another religion, without the aid of any royal patronage and support. Buddhism had its

Asoka, Zoroastrianism its Vishtaspa, Judaism its Joshua, Christianity its Constantine, but Mohammedanism had no person of royal rank and power to assist in its establishment and spread.

To-day this religion is acknowledged by nearly two hundred and fifty million souls and extends over an area equal to one-third of the globe. From Arabia it spread eastward over Persia, Turkestan, Afghanistan; westward, across Syria, Asia Minor, Turkey; southward, to Africa, covering more than half of that continent. It found its way to India, and beyond, to the islands of Sumatra, Java and Borneo.

Already within the first fifty years of its formation this religion extended from the Indus to the Tagus and from the Volga to the Arabian Sea. The Niger and the Nile, the Jordan and the Ganges, the Maritza and the Yang-tse-Kiang, all fertilize Mohammedan soil. Twice did this religion threaten to overrun Europe. Days there have been that were big with the fate of the world. On such a

day Themistocles met Xerxes, ordaining that Europe should receive her civilization from Greece rather than from Persia. On such a day, in the year 732, Charles Martel met Abd-er-Rahman and forthwith the cross, not the crescent, became the emblem of European faith. So, again, in 1683, when John, King of Poland, at the head of twenty thousand soldiers defeated the Mohammedan army at Vienna, it was once more decreed that Mohammedanism should not be the religion of Europe. Yet it must be remembered that to the early representatives of this faith the world's debt is incalculably great. For it was they who transmitted the treasures of Greek literature from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance; they who originated the graceful art forms of which the Taj-Mahal and the Alhambra are the most famous examples. It was they who contributed to the sciences of algebra and chemistry, astronomy and medicine; they who dotted the Saracen empire with universities and who built at Bagdad and at Cairo the most renowned libraries in

the world. During those centuries of ecclesiastical despotism when the Christian Church suppressed all intellectual activities save those that were theological, causing the talent that reproduces to supplant the genius that creates, Mohammedans did all in their power to encourage and stimulate research in every branch of human inquiry. No mediæval pope or bishop ever sent thanks to a thinker for scientific discovery, but the sheik, Ul-Islam, sent congratulations and the benediction of Allah to Al Hassan for his discovery of a fundamental law in optics. When London was a city of hovels and the stench in its streets such that no one could breathe its polluted air with impunity, Cordova was noted for the cleanliness and beauty of her streets and squares. Arabic is the most widely-spoken language in the world and though Chinese characters are used by more people, knowledge of Arabic will carry one farther round the world. And with the Arabic vocabulary has gone the Mohammedan religion. To-day we decorate our walls and

floors with fabrics that Mohammedans taught us to weave. We regale our senses with perfumes they taught us to make, we teach our children the algebra and higher mathematics which they taught the fathers.

It seemed to me essential to the formation of a just and adequate appreciation of Mohammed and his work that these preliminary statements should be made, all the more because of the still widespread impression that indebtedness is on the side of Mohammedans alone, that they owe to the civilizing agencies of Christianity their gradual emergence from semi-barbarism! Can we afford to forget how different Christian civilization itself would have been but for the beneficent devotion of mediæval Mohammedans to culture? And is it not true that many a civilizing agency from which non-Christian peoples have profited cannot properly be ascribed to Christianity or to any religion whatsoever, but only to sources that are essentially secular in their nature? It is high time we exercised discrimination in our accounting for the

civilization the world has reached. Great as the influence of Christianity unquestionably has been, it must be reckoned as only one of many factors that have contributed to the advancement of society. Moreover, it should be remembered that there are phases of non-Christian civilization notably, in China, as we have seen, equal, if not superior, to what we observe in the Christian civilization of Europe and America.

Mohammed has been called "the lying prophet." His name has been used as a synonym for Satan, and his followers have been described as "part of the infernal host." Dante described him as rent from the chin to where the body ends, wandering aimlessly about in the darkest region of hell among those who rent Christianity by controversy and schism. Luther, in one of his vehement expostulations upon people he despised, exclaimed, "Oh fie, you horrid devil, you damned Mohammed." Melancthon declared that Mohammed was "inspired by Satan." For seven centuries after the prophet's death, not a

public word in his defence or behalf was heard. The first just and kindly utterance came from the lips of Sir John Mandeville, an English traveller, and his tribute sounds like a bugle-note in the long, dark night of bigotry and hate. Four centuries later, Lessing, in his "Nathan der Weise," paused to pay his respects to the essential worth of Mohammed's religion, and by his parable of the three rings, taught posterity a permanently helpful lesson in the ethics of criticism. And then came Carlyle, fairly stunning the British public by placing Mohammed among the heroes of history. Yet notwithstanding the enlightening utterances of these candid investigators, prejudice, born of ignorance, persists in maintaining and circulating opinions about Mohammed that are without any valid basis whatsoever. Pulpit, platform and press must all plead guilty of unwarranted misrepresentation. I cite the preacher who described Mohammed as "a fanatic who used his religion as a cloak for immorality." I quote a lecturer who said that "Mohammed's religion

was synonymous with bravery, bigotry, knavery, sensuality and abysmal ignorance." I recall the definition of Mohammedanism in Webster's Dictionary — "a religion of imposture." Even the best Christian biographies are marred by the baneful effect of prejudice and by predilections so strong as to have led Renan to say that it is unreasonable to expect an orthodox Christian to do justice to the religion of Mohammed. No less disappointing are such Mohammedan biographies as that of Ameer Seyd Ali (for some years a judge on the British bench in Bengal), in which the best in Mohammedanism is contrasted with the worst in Christianity. The truth is, an adequate, satisfying life of Mohammed has yet to be written, and I venture the statement that the forthcoming volume by Professor Goldziher, perhaps the foremost living authority on Islam, will prove to be the desired work.

Mohammed was born in 571 at Mecca, one of the chief centres of Arabian commerce, and culture, visited annually by over two

hundred thousand pilgrims, in accordance with the Moslem law requiring a pilgrimage thither at least once during the lifetime of every believer. The prophet's father died before the child was born and his mother, before he had reached his teens. How deeply he felt the deprivations of orphanage is attested by many a passage in the Qur'an, enjoining upon the faithful tender regard for the person of orphans and scrupulous care not to touch their property. Thus, in the fourth "Sura," we read: "Did not Allah find thee an orphan and hath he not taken care of thee? And did he not find thee wandering in error, and hath he not guided thee into truth? And did he not find thee needy, and hath he not enriched thee? Wherefore oppress not the orphan: neither repulse the beggar; but declare the goodness of thy Lord." Bereft of both father and mother the lad was adopted, first by his grandfather and later by his uncle, a rich, generous, magnanimous man, who though disapproving of his nephew's radical tendencies in religion yet

on grounds of kinship gave him freely of the abundance of his possessions. But one day financial reverses came to this noble guardian and the boy was obliged to earn his own living. For several years he tended sheep on the neighboring hills, till, at the age of twenty-four, he entered the service of a rich widow, Kadijah by name, acting as camel driver and conductor of caravans journeying between Jerusalem and Damascus. So infatuated was she with Mohammed that she married him, and though she was fifteen years his senior, their married life seems to have been both happy and mutually inspiring. When I think of Kadijah as Mohammed's wife, I recall, by contrast, Lucrezia del Fede, the wife of Andrea del Sarto, the so-called "faultless painter," one who was able to correct faults in the drawing of Raphael and Michael Angelo, but who lacked their spiritual genius. Yet Andrea felt he might have rivalled them both even here, if only Lucrezia had given him sympathy, understanding and inspiration. All three Kadijah gave Mohammed. She did for

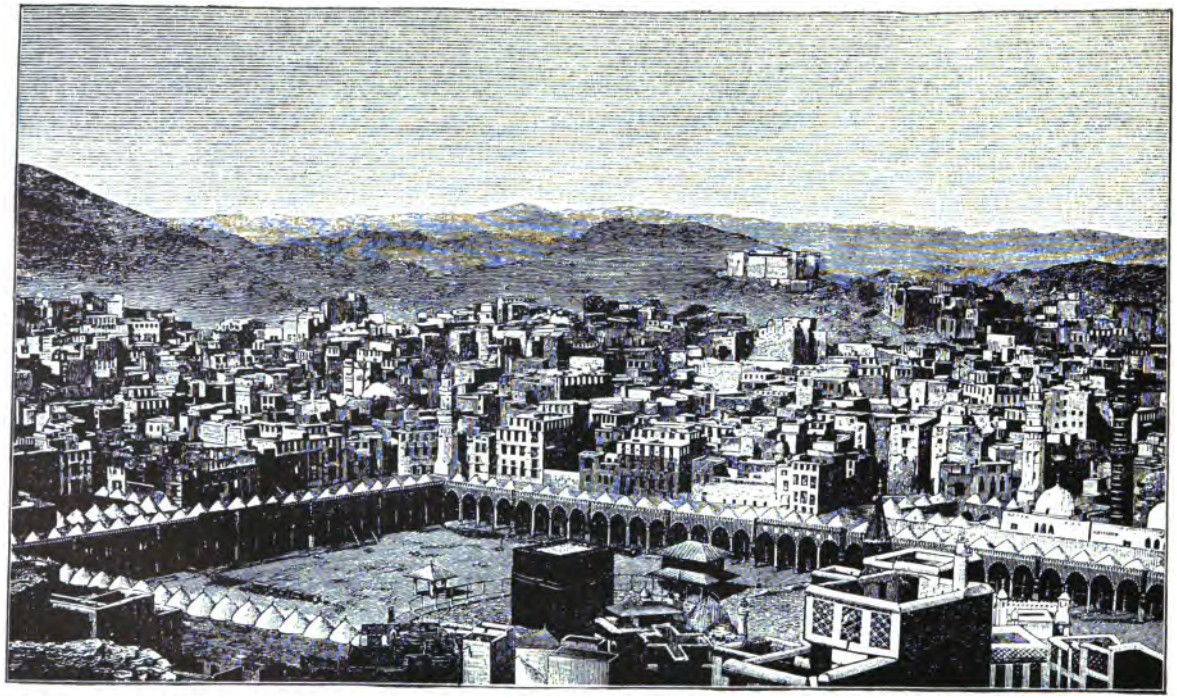
him just what it is in the power of woman to do for man, what ordinary women do in a commonplace way, what great women do in a divine way; what Vittoria Colonna did for Michael Angelo, Frau von Stein for Goethe, Elizabeth Barrett for Robert Browning, Margaret Fuller for James Freeman Clarke. I mean that Kadijah kept Mohammed true to his highest aspirations, challenged him to the best of which he was capable, restored his courage and zeal when enthusiasm waned and inertia came on, nursed him in his days of illness, strengthened him in his hours of weakness, sustained and inspired him in his aim to be worthy the high calling whereunto he had been called.

No authentic portrait of Mohammed has come down to us, chiefly because of that abhorrence of idolatry and image-worship which the prophet instilled into the hearts of his followers. All the portraits that have come down to us are outright fabrications, in the production of which imagination and prejudice have proven powerful creative

agencies. Nevertheless, from various sources, especially the "Sunna" or tradition, we are enabled to form a mental picture of Mohammed's personal appearance. A man of medium height, he was, with a large, well-shaped head; his dark, curly hair streaming down upon his broad shoulders and his restless eye looking out beneath heavy eyelashes and heavier eyebrows. His nose was slightly aquiline and his teeth were regular and white as hailstones. His was the simple life, lived at times to the point of severe austerity. For we read that he would sometimes go for months without eating a single hearty meal, lighting his own fire, cooking his own food, mending his clothes and shoes in order that his slaves might enjoy a larger share of freedom. As indicative of a fine personal trait with which he is not generally credited, the following story serves a useful purpose. Sleeping one day beneath a palm-tree he was startled on awakening to find an old enemy, Duthur, standing over him with drawn sword. "O Mohammed," he cried,

"who is there now to save thee?" To which Mohammed promptly replied, "God." Whereupon Duthur dropped the sword. Mohammed seizing it, arose and said, "Who is there now to save thee, Duthur?" "No one," he answered. "Then learn from me to be merciful," said Mohammed and handed him back the sword. Not far from Mohammed's home, on a high bluff overlooking the blazing sands of the desert, was a cave and thither he frequently retired to study, — not books, for he could not read, but Nature and the tablets of his own heart. Afflicted with a nervous disorder that sometimes caused loss of consciousness, it was in one of these attacks, while meditating in the cave, that he became apprised of his mission. Tradition tells us that he fell into convulsions, streams of perspiration rolled down his cheeks, his eyes burned like glowing coals, and as he was about to end his misery by leaping over the bluff he heard the voice of the angel Gabriel saying, "Stop, thou art the prophet of the Lord." Running to Kadijah, he exclaimed,

"Am I in truth a prophet, or am I mad?" To which Kadijah answered: "Thou hast spoken truly; no harmful thing has happened thee; thou dost not return evil for evil; thou art kind to relatives and friends. Rejoice, thou wilt be the prophet of prophets." What a significant reply! For assuredly there can be no safer test of fitness for a prophetic career than the possession of precisely such moral traits. But Mohammed hesitated at first, just as Jesus and Gotama and Zoroaster hesitated before entering upon their prophetic calling. The temptation legends, related of these leaders, — what are they but the figurative expression of that moment of doubt as to the true path of duty which all four experienced prior to assumption of the prophetic office? And precisely as Jesus was obliged to go from Nazareth to Capernaum, in the hope that there he would receive a respectful hearing, so Gotama turned from Kapilavasta to Benares, Confucius from Lu to the northern provinces of China, and Mohammed from Mecca to



THE KAABA STONE.

Medina; proving once more the truth of the saying that "a prophet is not without honor save in his own country." Hearing that assassination was planned, Mohammed resolved on flight, making his memorable escape in the dead of night, July 16, 622, to the city north of Mecca, now known as Medina. This year of the flight, or "Hejira," marks the beginning of the Mohammedan era.

Throughout his ten years' ministry at Mecca, Mohammed had been simply a reformer of manners and morals, denouncing the vices of his countrymen, rebuking low standards of business dealing and decrying the crass idolatry into which his own native Arabian religion had degenerated. Hitherto he had been only a Jeremiah, preaching in the wilderness; now, at Medina, he is a Hildebrand, ruling with an autocratic hand. He assumes the rôle of legislator, social and political organizer, conqueror. He drafts a new charter for the city, defines the duties of citizens, converts indiscriminate almsgiving into systematic taxation for the support of

his theocracy, prohibits intersectarian warfare and compels the disputants to submit their differences to him for settlement. Finally, he leads an aggressive, conquering crusade, winning over all Arabia to his message and claims. For nearly ten years he conducted this singularly successful work, till, on the eighth of June, 632, he died, leaving to Abu-Bekr (his beloved disciple) and to succeeding califs, the task of missionary expansion which gradually resulted in establishing the founder's faith over an empire greater than that of Rome.

To understand and appreciate just what it was that Mohammed accomplished, we must recall the conditions that obtained in mediæval Arabia.

For several centuries prior to the birth of Mohammed, communities of Jews and Christians had been living there in close social and political relation with the natives. This contiguity and intercourse formed a favorable condition for the production of a type of religion broader and better than any one of

the three as they then existed. Given such social and political interrelation among three distinct peoples, and there will occur a spontaneous sifting of religious beliefs and rites. What remains will commend itself to the whole mixed community. We see this process illustrated in the formation of the pantheons of Egypt and Babylonia, shaped as they were in response to such social unification followed by a sifting of theological material. We see it again in the Hebrew polytheism of the twelfth century before our era, which resulted from political and social fusion with the native Canaanites, followed by a similar sifting of religious ideas. So also in Arabia in the seventh century of our era a corresponding syncretism produced a new type of religion following the social assimilation of the three resident peoples. It began here, as elsewhere, in the sense of dissatisfaction with existing beliefs and practices, felt, at first, only by the thoughtful few. They saw what was needed and forthwith one of their number placed himself at the head of a movement

for positive reform. The Christianity of Arabia had shrunk into a shapeless mass of lifeless dogmas, and belief in "the trinity" had degenerated into tritheism. Arabian Judaism had deteriorated to the level of an idolatry that made place for the worship of Ezra (the scribe and probable editor of the Pentateuch), so that Mohammed complained of the "Ezrolatry" of his time. The native Arabian religion had sunk into a diversified astrological fetichism, and many of the rites were barbaric and immoral. From these Mohammed recoiled, identifying himself with the "Hanifites," a sect opposed to the popular idolatries of the time. Seizing the psychological moment for the surrender of all idolatry on the part of Jews, Christians and Arabs, he called for a return to what he believed was the original Semitic religion, the real fountain-source of Judaism, Christianity and Hanifism. First, to restore the ancestral faith of Abraham, who was neither Christian, nor Jew, nor Hanif, and who stood for monotheism and submission to the one only true God; then,

to blend with this restored faith all that was vital and serviceable in each of the three local religions, — this was Mohammed's work. He believed himself to be a "prophet of the Most High" to whom this syncretism had been revealed, yet he makes no claim to be in any way or degree supernatural. On the contrary, he emphatically affirms that he is only human, like the rest of his compatriots; simply the medium through whom the Almighty One has made known His will; merely the latest of the prophets, Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses and Jesus having been the five preceding prophets.

That Mohammed was an impostor it is difficult, if not impossible, to believe. Orthodox Christians and crude rationalists, it is true, have united in so regarding him, and Voltaire voiced their view in a verse as satirical as it is unjust.

"Chaque peuple à son tour a brillé sur la terre,
Par les lois, par les arts et surtout par les guerres
Le temps d'Arabie est enfin venu:
Il faut un nouveau culte, il faut de nouveaux fers,
Il faut un nouveau Dieu pour l'aveugle univers."

Voltaire's thought was that credulous humanity had been victimized by the crafty prophet of Arabia, who palmed off a new cult, new chains and a new God on an unsuspecting public! "Amen," cried the crude rationalists, for to them all religion is deception, an unscrupulous invention of politic priests and scheming prophets. But I hold that among the notions to be relegated to the realm of prejudice and superstition are these: religion is an invention, all prophets are impostors, Mohammed perpetrated the most egregious fraud on record. What is religion? It is man's expression through thought, feeling and conduct, of his relation to the universe, or to the Power, or Powers, which he thinks of as governing it. And since man always has had and ever will have some such thought, it follows that religion is as spontaneous as it is inevitable, and that it can never die while a thinking being remains on the planet. That Mohammed was not an impostor can be proved by reference to several significant incidents in his career.

As a young man Mohammed had received a handsome salary for serving as custodian of the "Kaaba" that enshrined the sacred stone worshipped by resident believers and by visiting pilgrims. But in time there came to be associated with this object of veneration certain superstitious practices which Mohammed could not conscientiously indorse. To criticise them meant loss of his position and salary, yet he did not hesitate to denounce them and promptly sacrificed his profitable custodianship. Surely such conduct was not that of an impostor. Again, when implored by his wealthy uncle to desist from his preaching of "radical" views, Mohammed to name his own price for the silence his uncle desired, he repudiated the tempting offer, preferring the luxury of free thought and free speech with poverty, if need be, to the luxury of ease and wealth with a tarnished soul. Read his own brave and uncompromising utterance: "Were I to be offered the sun in my right hand and the moon in my left hand to induce me to abandon my undertaking,

the offer would be futile, for I will not rest until the Lord carry his cause to victory, or till I die for it." Could such be the part of an impostor? Once more, his only claim was that of being the instrument through which God had revealed the Qur'an. He made no claim to be infallible, or sinless, or supernatural. "Praise me not," he said, "as Jesus was praised. I am liable to err as other men, — I, too, need forgiveness for sin." Such, surely is not the language of an impostor. Without pausing to adduce further evidence of Mohammed's sincerity and integrity of purpose we may justly believe that nothing but the bigotry, malice and jealousy of enemies originated the charge of imposture. And nothing but blind prejudice and lazy indifference to truth can account for the perpetuation of the charge.

We come now to the book in which Mohammed's message has been recorded.

The Qur'an is the most widely read of all the sacred scriptures of the world. It is more extensively and frequently read among Mos-

lems than is the New Testament among Christians. It is claimed for the Qur'an that if all extant copies were to be destroyed, no permanent loss would be involved because there is an eternal copy by the throne of Allah from which a fresh revelation could at any time be made. Moreover, the book is believed to have been revealed to Mohammed, piecemeal, by relays of angels, he dictating each "revelation" to his secretary, who at once committed it to writing on whatever material was available at the moment. Finally the entire series of revelations was collected and edited by Abu-Bekr, in the year 634. Two features of the Qur'an differentiate it from all other Bibles; its singleness of authorship and its singleness of text. The caliph Uthman, it was, who in 642 published a final recension of the book and ordered all earlier versions to be destroyed. Thus the Qur'an is the work of but one author and exists in only one text. Of all the Bibles of the great religions, the Qur'an is the least attractive to the general reader. Curiosity draws him to its pages, but he is soon

repelled because the book has no continuity of thought, no charm of style, the thought and the style suggesting the camel of the desert — free to browse wherever stubble is to be found. The one hundred and fourteen chapters of the book are provided with superscriptions, indeed, but these, for the most part, bear no relation to the contents. The events narrated follow no chronological order, and only the patient scholarship of specialists has enabled us to shape from this literary waste the prophet's thought. Mohammed was neither a theologian nor a philosopher, but a religious enthusiast with a genius for adoption and adaptation of Jewish and Christian lore. He spoke his "revelations" as they came, regardless of their agreement with or contradiction of each other. When modern Muslims find two contradictory injunctions on one and the same subject, they take the one best suited to modern ideas. For this they find warrant in the second Sura: "What verses we cancel or cause thee to forget, we give a better, or its like." Already there are two hundred and

twenty-five such cancelled verses on which Muslims are agreed. The ultimate criterion on which the abrogation of passages in the Qur'an depends is the agreement of Muslims themselves. "My people," said Mohammed, "will never agree on an error," and in such agreement is the hope of Islam. From the surcharged brain of Mohammed his thought pushed on undiked, unchannelled, too swift to allow of skilful or consistent expression. Carlyle complained that the Qur'an was the most toilsome reading he ever undertook. He described it as "a wearisome, confused jumble; endless iterations, long-windedness, entanglement; most crude, incondite, insupportable stupidity in short." But, thanks to the labors of Arabic scholars who have applied the principles of "the higher criticism" to the Qur'an, we can now arrange its chapters in chronological order, dividing the book into three sections, corresponding to the three periods in the prophet's career. The first of these, marked by doubt, misgiving, misappreciation and opposition is readily discerned

in a series of chapters aglow with enthusiasm bordering on frenzy, recording his visions with a fervor that persuades us of his sincerity. The second period was that of growing appreciation and success, and is reflected in chapters that are marked by calm, dispassionate argument addressed to converts who recognize his authority. The third period finds the prophet making concessions and compromises for the sake of further success. He has grown shrewd, calculating, politic in his aggressive crusade, and these qualities come to light in a group of chapters whose weak, willowy utterances betray a decided decline from the high plane where sincere consecration and perfervid enthusiasm had transfigured the man.

Described in a single word the Qur'an is a potpourri of myths, legends, narratives, legal statutes, ethical precepts and ceremonial injunctions. It is a reservoir into which, through Mohammed's mind, many different streams of Jewish, Christian and Arabian thought have been emptied. As conductor of caravans

Mohammed must have acquired considerable information on Biblical subjects. Tales of Abraham, Moses, the Prophets, Jesus, related by not very competent reporters, entered Mohammed's head and fermented there. What he knew of Old and New Testament characters he never derived from direct contact with these books. Probably he never saw a Hebrew Old Testament or a Greek New Testament. But many a Hebrew and Christian story, as recorded in rabbinical books, he doubtless heard, while such apocalyptic books as Joel, Daniel, Ezekiel, Enoch, Revelation, exerted their influence, as the Qur'an amply testifies.

The reading of a few selected passages may well begin with the prayer more frequently recited by believers than any other. It has been called the "Lord's Prayer" of Mohammedanism because of its frequent repetition by the faithful, and because, like the Lord's Prayer in the gospel of Matthew, it consists of seven verses and is regarded as a "summary of the faith."

"Praise be to God, Lord of the worlds!
The compassionate, the merciful!
King on the day of reckoning!
Thee only do we worship, and to Thee do we cry for help.
Guide Thou us on the straight path,
The path of those to whom Thou hast been gracious;
With whom thou art not angry, and who go not astray." [1]

Woe to those who STINT the measure:
Who when they take by measure from others, exact the full;
But when they mete to them or weigh to them, minish, —
What! have they no thought that they shall be raised again for the great day?
The day when mankind shall stand before the Lord of the worlds.
Yes! the register of the wicked is in Sidjin, a book distinctly written. Woe, on that day to those who treated the day of judgment as a lie!
Yes; they shall be shut out as by a veil from their Lord on that day;
Then shall they be burned in Hell-fire:
Then shall it be said to them, "This is what ye deemed a lie."
Even so. But the register of the righteous is in Illiyoun; a book distinctly written; the angels who draw nigh unto God attest it.
Surely, among delights shall the righteous dwell!

[1] Sura i.

Seated on bridal couches they will gaze around;
Thou shalt mark in their faces the brightness of delight.[1]

This day have I perfected your religion for you and have fulfilled up the measure of my favors upon you: and it is my pleasure that Islam be your religion.

O believers! when ye address yourselves to prayer, wash your faces, and your hands up to the elbow, and wipe your heads, and your feet to the ankles.

And if ye have become unclean, then purify yourselves. But if ye are sick, or on a journey, and ye find no water, then take clean sand and rub your faces and your hands with it.

God hath promised to those who believe, and do the things that are right, that for them is pardon and a great reward.

But they who are infidels and treat our signs as lies — these shall be meted with Hell-fire.

O people of the Scriptures! now is our Apostle come to you to clear up to you much that ye have concealed of those Scriptures, and to pass over many things. Now hath a light and a clear Book come to you from God, by which God will guide him who shall follow after his good pleasure, to paths of peace, and will bring them out of the darkness to the light, by his will: and to the straight path will he guide them.[2]

Considering the heterogeneous content of the Qur'an, it may be fairly questioned whether one is justified in speaking of the ethics of the

[1] Sura lxxxviii. [2] Sura v.

Qur'an. Yet despite its heterogeneity there is one integrating ethical idea that pervades the book, namely submission. And "submission" (Islam) expresses in a single word the core of Mohammed's message as a moral leader. The supreme duty of Mohammedans is to submit to the will of "the omnipotent, resistless One," the One to whom everything is subject, "the Lord of the East and of the West," the all-governing, all-compelling One; "the mighty and merciful One," whose mercy is due to his very omnipotence. He is likened to the wind and all mankind to a field of grain that sways with the blowing of the wind. He is a heavenly Sultan and Muslims are they who submit to his decrees, they who, like the willows bend before the blast, while infidels are they who, like the oak, resist it.

But it would be a serious mistake to suppose that submission as inculcated by Mohammed implied merely a spiritual attitude on the part of believers toward Allah. Four distinct duties are involved in the doctrine of submission.

First: To abjure idolatry, which is the bestowal upon false gods of the homage due to Allah alone. Just as the subjects of an earthly Sultan are instantly punished to the full extent of the civil law when they dare to enthrone a usurper and do him homage, so idolaters who dare to acknowledge any other God than this heavenly Sultan will be punished hereafter, on the Judgment Day, to the full extent of the religious law. Every mosque, every palace bears witness to Mohammed's abhorrence of idolatry. Nowhere are statues, or images, or any sort of reproductions of the human form to be seen, but everywhere arabesque decorations, — those geometric traceries that reproduce only objects from the inanimate world.

Second: To extend the heavenly Sultan's dominion on earth, to make converts, by force if need be, because refusal to acknowledge and obey Allah is rebellion, and rebellion must be suppressed, by persuasion if possible and if not, then by force. Like Robespierre, Mohammed believed in the efficacy of fear, holding that the preservation of a creed and of good

character is insured only by the discipline of terror.

But here we must distinguish between the prophet's earlier and later injunctions. In the earlier chapters of the Qur'an he constantly exhorts his Meccan followers to bear patiently the wrongs inflicted on them because of their religion. His earliest permission to fight is given to those "who have been driven forth from their homes undeservedly" merely for saying "Our Lord is God." [1] A more general warrant for making war on the Meccans is given in the second Sura (186–190): "Fight in God's way with those who fight with you, but do not take the aggressive; verily God loves not the aggressor." Later, Mohammed used force without hesitation, not only against the Meccans, but to subdue other cities, like Ta'if, and to bring the Bedouin tribes into submission.[2] But it is clear that the motive of these wars, as of those against the Jews in Medina and its vicinity, was political rather than re-

[1] Sura xxii. 40, 42.

[2] Sura xvi. 87, 84; xxix. 45; xlii. 47, 257, 64, 12.

ligious, though Mohammed, as the head of a church-state, doubtless regarded the two as identical. At the moment of his death he had an army marshalled for an expedition into Syria. In one of the apparently authentic traditions he urges his followers to make war upon unbelievers until they confess the unity of God and then grant them security. In his aggressive policy he distinguished heathen polytheists and idolaters from the adherents of the "revealed religions, Judaism and Christianity," tolerating the latter and exacting a tax from them for protection received, while the former he constrained to abandon their errors and submit to Allah.[1]

Never has it been either the principle or the practice of Islam to convert people generally, by forcible means. Many of the early caliphs, for economic reasons, disapproved of voluntary conversion of their Jewish and Christian subjects. More fanatical rulers laid the adherents of other religions under so many disadvantages that members of them became

[1] Sura xvi. 126; xlii. 13, 14; iii. 19, 99, 100; xxii. 66; ix. 6, 11.

Moslems for relief. In the first appendix to T. W. Arnold's "The Preaching of Islam" there is an exhaustive array of quotations from the Qur'an, regarding Mohammed's attitude to missionary work, which the doctrine of submission requires. Here, in chronological order the texts are marshalled, including those abrogated by the agreements of the Moslems.

The third obligation which submission involves is obedience to the precepts of Allah, the making of one's moral account "square" before the Judgment Day dawns. For on that Day the heavenly Sultan determines the fate of each human soul. Then will a man walking to the Judgment-seat be met by a loathsome-looking object to which he will say, "Be gone;" but it will reply, "I cannot, I am thy conscience." Then will the fraudulent buyer and the fraudulent seller walk to the Judgment-seat with the goods they dishonestly bought or sold tied to their necks and dragging behind them! No religion has made so much of the utilitarian motive of reward and punishment as has Mohammedanism, nor is it anywhere presented in

such frankly materialistic terms as in the Qur'an.

The fourth factor in the ethics of submission is loyal devotion to the "five pillars of fidelity," as they are called, the simple religious forms, binding upon all believers:—

1. Repetition of the creed, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his prophet."
2. Prayer and ablutions five times daily in response to the Muezzin when he ascends his minaret to summon the faithful to prayer.
3. Almsgiving, two and a half per cent of one's possessions to be devoted to philanthropy.
4. Fasting from sunrise to sunset of the month of "Ramadan," in which the prophet fled from Mecca to Medina.
5. A pilgrimage, at least once in one's lifetime, to Mecca.

In the simplicity of these requirements Mohammed showed his practical wisdom. Only the fifth was for many a hardship, and eventually it was modified to meet conditions where fulfilment was most difficult or impossible. So the Roman Catholic Church protects its members against ceremonial oppression by corresponding concessions; so the

apostle Paul abolished the rite of circumcision, though deemed by his fellow-Jews to be the badge of noblest citizenship.

In the ethical legislation that Mohammed provided for his theocracy, prominence was given to total abstinence from intoxicating liquor and to humaneness. Drunkenness is the vice most to be feared in tropical countries and was generally condemned as a violation of Divine Law. Mohammed's opposition to Christianity was based, in part, upon its failure to put an absolute veto on the use of intoxicants. General Lew Wallace, after twenty years' residence in Constantinople, declared that while Christian drunkards were to be seen daily in the city streets, he never once saw a drunken Mohammedan. In the estimation of President Eliot of Harvard University Mohammedanism has been a vastly better thing for many of the tribes of Africa, habitually drunk, than Christianity could have been. A "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" is unknown in Mohammedan countries except in cities overrun with Christians,

and in Turkish cemeteries, it is said, the four corners of slabs that cover graves are grooved to catch the rainfall so that the birds may drink and sing over the places where their human brethren sleep.

The charge of advocating polygamy and slavery has been made against Mohammed many times. But it were well if his critics paused to remember that these evils existed for centuries before his time and that the most he could do was to improve the condition of slaves and the position of women. From several Suras we learn that he inculcated kindly treatment of slaves and ranked their emancipation as a virtue for which the slaveholder would be abundantly rewarded in paradise. Certainly we to-day are too near the "emancipation proclamation" to dare to reproach Mohammed for not having abolished slavery.

In dealing with the problem of marriage and divorce Mohammed limited the number of wives a man could have to four, at the same time prescribing monogamy for all who could

not make proper provision for more than one wife. He conditioned divorce upon four months' support of the wife after separation had taken place and he required four witnesses to vindicate a charge of adultery, punishing with a hundred stripes and imprisonment any one who failed to prove the charge.[1]

When we remember the utterly uncivilized character of the tribes that inhabited Africa and parts of Asia at the time of Mohammed's appearance, we may well believe that his gospel of submission was exactly suited to the needs of those peoples, for they were still in the childhood stage of development, in which obedience to rulers and rules is the highest virtue. Nor is anything in religious history more remarkable than the way in which Mohammed fitted his transfiguring ideas into the existing social system of Arabia. To his everlasting credit it must be said that in lifting to a higher plane of life the communities of his day and place, he achieved that which neither the Judaism nor the Christianity of mediæval

[1] See Suras 2, 4, 24, 65.

Arabia could accomplish. Nay more, in the fulfilment of that civilizing work Mohammed rendered invaluable service, not only to Arabia, but also to the entire world.

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